

# COVID-19

## Q&A ON COVID-19 AND NCDS

21 MAY 2020

### IF I HAVE CANCER, WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT COVID-19?

#### 1 ARE PEOPLE WITH CANCER MORE SERIOUSLY AFFECTED BY COVID-19?

- People with cancer are more likely to get COVID-19. They are more likely to develop severe disease and are unfortunately more likely to die from COVID-19.

#### 2 IF I HAVE CANCER, WHAT SHOULD I DO TO AVOID GETTING COVID-19?

- Wash your hands frequently, always avoid touching your face.
- Stay away from anyone who you know is sick.
- Ask family and friends who are sick or could be sick to kindly avoid visiting you.
- Always stay at least 3 feet (1 meter) apart from any other person when you are outside of the house.
- Minimize, and if possible, completely avoid, going to places with large crowds – this includes the stores, supermarkets, and pharmacies. When possible, ask a friend or relative who is healthy to purchase necessary items for you.
- Wear a face mask for protection if you must leave home to go to crowded areas.



#### 3 HOW CAN I PREPARE MYSELF AND MY FAMILY DURING THIS PANDEMIC?

- Planning for essentials like food, water and medicines is critical.
- Ensure that you have an adequate supply of all your medications. Keep at least a 90-day supply, on hand.
- Ensure an adequate supply of healthy food choices.
- Be physically active every day.
- Have cleaning supplies in your home (soap, disinfectants, hand sanitizer).
- Have your doctor's phone number handy, somewhere you and your family members can find it easily. Other phone numbers that may be helpful to have on hand are: pharmacy, medical specialists, insurance provider.

#### 4 WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I FEEL ILL?

- You should call your doctor right away. Remember, because of your cancer your feeling ill may not be due to coronavirus and could be several other things.
- Check your temperature. Having a fever when you have cancer can be serious.
- Do not be afraid to seek care if you are not well. Most hospitals and clinics have set up ways of protecting people coming in from getting infected by the coronavirus. It is important to get help if you are sick.

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- Symptoms of coronavirus include: cough, difficulty breathing, fever, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell. If you develop any of these symptoms call your doctor right away.

## 5 SHOULD I STILL GO TO THE DOCTOR FOR REGULARLY SCHEDULED VISITS?

- It is important to keep your regularly scheduled doctor visits.
- Many clinics have established ways to talk to the doctor on the phone without having to physically go to the clinic. This keeps you safe by keeping you away from places where you could be exposed to the coronavirus. Be sure to stay in touch with your doctor.
- If you have a central venous catheter/port, discuss with your doctor whether it can be flushed every 12 weeks, reducing the frequency of visits to the clinic where exposure to coronavirus could occur.

## 6 SHOULD I CONTINUE MY CANCER TREATMENT DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?

- Do not start or stop any treatment without first talking to your doctor.
- Cancer medicine can weaken your immune system (your ability to fight infection) but is important for treating your cancer.
- There is no evidence that you should stop your cancer medicine if you are otherwise well. Your doctor may consider changing your medication, so you don't have to



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come into the clinic as often (for example, when possible, changing from a medicine given through intravenous infusion, to medications to be taken by mouth). Every person with cancer is different, so be sure to talk to your doctor about what is best for you.

- Radiation treatment: individuals receiving treatment with radiotherapy should consult with their doctor about any changes to their treatment program. Some people may be able to reduce the number of times they are going in to receive radiation therapy. This makes it less likely for you to be exposed to the coronavirus. However, it is important for this to be balanced with the risk of the cancer growing.
- If you develop COVID-19, your doctor may consider stopping your cancer treatment to help your recovery.

## 7 WHAT CAN I DO IF I AM FEELING STRESSED OR ANXIOUS?

- These are trying times that can be very stressful. Many individuals with chronic disease already have a lot on their mind and may have underlying depression and/or anxiety. The COVID-19 pandemic can make things more difficult. Know that you are not alone.
- Be sure to find ways of taking a break from coronavirus news, this provides you with the space to think about your wellbeing.
- Stay connected to friends and family. Call friends and family members regularly to maintain social connectedness.
- Find things that help you relax, such as reading, listening to music, or walking.
- If things become too much, if you experience a great deal of anxiety or depression, be sure to reach out for help: call your friend or family member or call your physician.