

COVID-19: Information for transplant patients

Updated: 25 March 2020

COVID-19 (coronavirus) has been widely publicised in the national press. As a transplant patient you are at greater risk from COVID-19. We are writing to advise you on ways to protect yourself and what to do if you become unwell.

The government's guidance is regularly updating and it is important to keep up to date. The most up to date government advice can be found here: www.gov.uk/coronavirus.

The Kidney Care UK website also provides a good summary of the current advice for patients: www.kidneycareuk.org/news-and-campaigns/coronavirus-advice

Shielding advice for transplant patients

On the 21 March 2020, the government issued guidance on “shielding” – a way of protecting people like you, who are most vulnerable to serious illness from COVID-19. Shielding means that you minimise all interaction with other people and stay in your home for the next 12 weeks. The NHS is writing to all transplant patients and other individuals who must follow this guidance. Shielding is for your personal protection and we recommend that you follow it.

What should I do if I have symptoms of COVID-19?

- If you have a high temperature (over 37.5°C) or a new, continuous cough then stay at home. If you feel your symptoms are getting worse or after 7 days you do not feel better, then please use the NHS 111 coronavirus service: www.111.nhs.uk/covid-19 or call NHS 111.
- In an emergency, call 999 if you are seriously ill. **Do not stop or change your immunosuppression medication, unless advised to do so by the transplant team.**
- Please let us know if you think you have COVID-19 by emailing: rf.covidkidneyadvice@nhs.net. If you don't have email or want to speak to someone sooner, please use our direct line telephone number: 020 7472 6687 (Monday to Friday, 9-5pm).
- Our transplant nurses are extremely busy at present, so it may take longer to get back to you. Please use this advice line which is staffed by a senior member of the nursing team.

You can also find general information about COVID-19 here: www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19.

What do I need to do?

Stay at home and follow the instructions below:

- Wash your hands using soap and hot water at regular intervals throughout the day, or use alcohol gel to avoid picking up viruses.
- Avoid rubbing your eyes, nose or mouth, which can transmit any virus from your hands to yourself.
- If you do have a cough or are sneezing, please cough or sneeze into a tissue and discard after a single use – “catch it, bin it, kill it”.
- Clean hard surfaces such as work tops and door handles with standard cleaning products.

What do I need to do if I want to stay “shielded”?

- Strictly avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). These symptoms include high temperature and/or a new and continuous cough.
- Do not leave your house.
- Do not attend any gatherings. This includes gatherings of friends and families in private spaces eg family homes, weddings and religious services.
- Do not go out for shopping, leisure or travel and when arranging food or medication deliveries, these should be left at the door to minimise contact.
- During this time, keep in touch using in other ways such as video or phone calls, internet, and social media.

Current guidance (25 March 2020) recommends you should continue this shielding/self-isolation for at least 12 weeks. Please visit: gov.uk/coronavirus for the latest information.

What should I do if I have someone else living with me?

The rest of your household does not need to use shielding measures for themselves, but they should support you in shielding and try and keep socially distanced. It's important to keep shared spaces well ventilated.

See the section titled 'How to protect extremely vulnerable people (shielding)' on the government's website: www.gov.uk/coronavirus for more guidance on what to do if you live with someone else.

Should I still come to clinic or turn up for blood tests if I am well?

Unless you have had a kidney transplant in the last 6 months **or** you have agreed by phone or email with your transplant consultant/nurse that you must continue to come to clinic, **please do not attend the transplant clinic.**

Please be advised this does **not** apply to patients who are coming to the Monday or Thursday new transplant clinic.

We are going to contact all of our transplant patients over the next few weeks to discuss this advice with you, and in most cases you will not be asked to come in for blood tests or clinic visits to help reduce the risk of you chance of you getting COVID-19.

What if I am due to come to clinic and I have symptoms of COVID-19?

If you have symptoms of COVID-19 on the day of your appointment, **please do not attend the clinic.** Visit NHS 111 online for advice or call 111 if you don't have access to the internet. Please contact the clinic afterwards to let us know what has been advised.

If you are told you may have COVID-19, you should let the transplant clinic know as we may need to change some of your medication for a while. **Please do not attend the transplant clinic without phoning first.**

You may be asked to attend clinic on another day, when you are better.

What should I do if I am running out of medication?

If you are running low on transplant medication, please contact the renal pharmacy team by email on rf.renalpharmacy@nhs.net or call 020 7472 6613.

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Service: Kidney service

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Please note, government guidance is reviewed and updated regularly. We endeavour to review this resource as regularly as possible. Please refer to: [gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus) for the latest information.