



ST. PHILIP HOWARD CENTRE, 4 SOUTHGATE DRIVE, CRAWLEY RH10 6RP

1st March 2021

Dear Applicant,

Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, we are unable to provide a clinical support team to care for the anyone during our Lourdes Pilgrimage this year. As you can imagine, many of our clinicians are exhausted from the circumstances experienced in our hospitals and other care settings around the diocese over the past 12 months, but we are hopeful that they will join us as pilgrims for rest and recuperation of body and soul.

In general, older people are at increased risk for infection and severe disease as are people who belong to Black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) groups and those who have comorbidities (the more comorbidities, the greater the risk). **We also do not know how effectively vaccines will protect against infection/severe illness.** We would therefore ask you to take the time to consider the current guidelines set by the NHS and if you have medical conditions in either of these categories, we strongly suggest that it would be safer for you to stay at home and join the “Virtual Pilgrimage” this summer and then travel to Lourdes in 2022.

People at high risk (clinically extremely vulnerable)

You may be at high risk from coronavirus if you:

- have had an organ transplant
- are having chemotherapy or antibody treatment for cancer, including immunotherapy
- are having an intense course of radiotherapy (radical radiotherapy) for lung cancer
- are having targeted cancer treatments that can affect the immune system (such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors)
- have blood or bone marrow cancer (such as leukemia, lymphoma, or myeloma)
- have had a bone marrow or stem cell transplant in the past 6 months, or are still taking immunosuppressant medicine
- have been told by a doctor you have a severe lung condition (such as cystic fibrosis, severe asthma, or severe COPD)
- have a condition that means you have a very high risk of getting infections (such as SCID or sickle cell)
- are taking medicine that makes you much more likely to get infections (such as high doses of steroids or immunosuppressant medicine)
- have a serious heart condition and are pregnant
- have a problem with your spleen or your spleen has been removed (splenectomy)
- are an adult with Down's syndrome

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- are an adult who is having dialysis or has severe (stage 5) long-term kidney disease
- have been classed as clinically extremely vulnerable, based on clinical judgement and an assessment of your needs
- anyone who received a letter from the NHS advising them to shield

People at moderate risk (clinically vulnerable)

People at moderate risk from coronavirus include people who:

- are 70 or older
- have a lung condition that is not severe (such as asthma, COPD, emphysema or bronchitis)
- have heart disease (such as heart failure)
- have diabetes
- have chronic kidney disease
- have liver disease (such as hepatitis)
- have a condition affecting the brain or nerves (such as Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis or cerebral palsy)
- have a condition that means they have a high risk of getting infections
- are taking medicine that can affect the immune system (such as low doses of steroids)
- are very obese (a BMI of 40 or above)
- are pregnant

These lists are very detailed and if further guidance is needed, please discuss with your GP or specialist Consultant and forward all information to the Pilgrimage Office. Considerations must be made to ensure that all travelling will be covered by insurance for quarantine and repatriation should the need arise whilst in Lourdes.

For the many who will be unable to travel in 2021, we offer our prayers and best wishes that you keep safe and look forward to us all meeting in 2022.

Yours sincerely

Dr Joe O'Dwyer (Chief Medical Officer)

Emma Moon (Chief Nurse)

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