COVID-19: Frequently Asked Questions for Infusion Patients

PLEASE NOTE: This document contains general information which may not be applicable to all patients, facilities, communities, and circumstances.

- Infusion providers are encouraged to modify the content to reflect information, which is accurate and specific to your facility, institutional policy, and your local/state health department recommendations.
- Patients are encouraged to contact their healthcare provider with additional questions or for more specific guidance.

MY COMMUNITY IS EXPERIENCING AN OUTBREAK OF COVID-19, AND I KNOW MY MEDICATION CAN MAKE ME MORE LIKELY TO GET SICK. SHOULD I SKIP MY INFUSIONS UNTIL THIS OUTBREAK IS OVER?

Different infusion therapies affect the immune system in different ways, which means some medications will weaken the immune system more than others. Also, it is important to remember that infusion medications are meant to be given on a set schedule to control the progression of disease. For this reason, it is important to communicate with your provider to discuss your specific case and determine a plan that balances the risks and benefits of receiving your prescribed therapy during a community outbreak of COVID-19. As always, you should not stop receiving your infusions without first consulting your healthcare team.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I AM EXPERIENCING FEVER, COUGH OR OTHER SIGNS OF ILLNESS AND HAVE AN UPCOMING APPOINTMENT AT AN INFUSION CENTER?

Many of the treatments administered at infusion centers work with your immune system to control your disease, so much of the time you should not receive your treatment if you are experiencing any type of illness. In areas with community transmission, your provider may also want to know if someone in your household or a close contact is sick. Please call your infusion center or healthcare provider BEFORE YOUR APPOINTMENT to discuss your situation and determine the best way to keep you healthy and prevent spreading illness to others.
What is my risk of getting COVID-19 at my infusion center?

Infusion centers are experienced in caring for patients with weakened immune systems, so most likely they already have infection prevention plans in place to keep patients safe. Infection prevention plans are used all year, every year, to protect patients and healthcare workers from illnesses like the common cold and the flu. Your infusion center’s Infection Prevention Plan should include things like:

- Disinfecting all patient care equipment (i.e. blood pressure cuffs, infusion chairs, IV pumps) between patient use
- Disinfection of frequently touched surfaces such as doorknobs, phones, check-in area pens and clipboards, faucets, etc.
- Screening patients and staff for respiratory illnesses and potential exposure to someone with COVID-19
- Limiting or restricting visitors
- Asking patients and staff to wear a mask

Should I wear a face covering when I am out in public to protect myself from COVID-19?

Yes, you should wear a face covering when outside of your home in areas where people are congregating, but not to protect yourself—to protect others! Wearing a face covering (such as a cloth mask) is meant to help prevent people who have COVID-19 but do not know it from spreading it to others. New studies show that people can spread COVID-19 before symptoms develop, and some people with COVID-19 may never develop symptoms at all. To prevent spreading COVID-19 to others, the CDC now recommends wearing a non-medical grade face covering when out in the community and in any other situation where it is hard to keep a 6-foot distance from others.

Facemask supply is limited, and medical-grade masks like surgical masks and N95 respirators must be reserved for healthcare workers and first responders caring for patients with known or suspected COVID-19 infections. The CDC website has more information about cloth face coverings, including instructions for making cloth masks with supplies you may already have at home.
What else can I do to protect myself from COVID-19?

The following steps can help reduce your risk of getting sick with disease:

- **Wash your hands** frequently
- Stay home as much as possible
- Take care to keep space between yourself and others. Keep a 6-foot distance—about two arm-lengths—from anyone who does not live in your household
- Wear a cloth face covering when in public, especially in settings where it can be difficult to keep a distance between yourself and others.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue and immediately throw it away. If a tissue is unavailable, use your bent elbow.
- Try to avoid touching your face (to keep germs out of your nose, mouth, and eyes)
- Clean frequently touched surfaces in your home with a household disinfectant
- Wash your hands. Yes, we’ve listed this twice! Handwashing is the very best way to prevent the spread of infection.

How do I wash my hands?

Okay, this may not technically be a “frequently asked question” but it should be—everyone can use a reminder! The following is from the CDC *Life is Better with Clean Hands* Campaign:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Follow these five steps every time:</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.</td>
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<td>2. Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.</td>
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<td>3. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end twice.</td>
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<td>4. Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.</td>
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<td>5. Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.</td>
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If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.