

## COVID-19 Information and FAQs for Patients With Cancer

We know that our patients with cancer and their families have questions related to care during this time. Our hospitals and clinics have infection-prevention protocols and systems in place to keep patients, visitors and health care workers safe. For everyone's sake, we are taking [extra safety precautions in our clinics and hospitals](#), including more frequent cleaning, entrance screenings and social distancing in our registration and waiting areas.

### Have COVID-like Symptoms? Call Before Coming In

If you have an upcoming appointment and have symptoms including fever, new cough, new shortness of breath or recent loss of taste or smell, or if you fear that you have been exposed to novel coronavirus (COVID-19), please call your provider's office or our nurse phone line – **800-926-8273** – to discuss your symptoms before coming to your scheduled appointment.

### Video Visits

Our physicians and care teams will also be reviewing our schedules and contacting patients whose visits may be appropriate to convert to [MyUCSDChart video visits](#). We will make every effort to ensure this is a smooth and easy experience for you.

### Visitor Restrictions for Clinic Appointments, Infusion Treatments and Radiation Treatments

For those coming to clinic appointments, infusion treatments, or radiation treatments, be aware that we are currently following a strict no-visitor policy with very limited exceptions. We encourage caregivers and family members to participate by phone or video, with the provider's consent, during the patient's appointment. For more information, see [Visitor Restrictions](#).

### FAQs for Cancer Patients

#### – Who is at higher risk of getting very sick from COVID-19?

Older adults (age 60 and older) and those with serious chronic medical conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, lung disease and cancer are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19. Patients who are immunocompromised are also at higher risk.

#### – What does it mean to be immunocompromised?

Being immunocompromised means having a weakened immune system. White blood cells fight infections. If white blood cell counts are low or white blood cells are not functioning well, the body cannot fight infections effectively. Immunocompromised patients may include patients with cancer and those who are on chemotherapy. It can also include patients with HIV, transplant patients, patients on immunosuppressive medication and patients with other known immunodeficiencies.

#### – As a patient with cancer, how much higher is my risk of severe illness from COVID-19?

A recent study of patients with cancer who had COVID-19 found that patients who had undergone chemotherapy or surgery in the previous month had a higher risk compared with those who had not received recent treatment. The risk appears to be higher in patients with more than one chronic medical condition.

Patients undergoing active treatment for cancer are presumably at higher risk than those who are in remission. Patients in their first year after stem cell transplantation or CAR-T cell therapy could be at higher risk for complications if infected by COVID-19. Those who are beyond one year after transplantation and still considered immunocompromised may also have an elevated risk for complications.

#### – What precautions should be taken by people at higher risk of serious illness with COVID-19?

To protect everyone's health and well-being, we encourage you to stay at home, except for essential needs, per any stay-at-home order in your region. Here are other steps to take if you're at higher risk from COVID-19:

- Have a 30-day supply of all medications, and request refills at least 7 days before running out.
- Practice social distancing.
- [Wear a mask](#) — a bandana, scarf or homemade face covering — if you leave home for any essential purpose.
- Avoid crowded places and close contact with sick people.
- Stay home when you're sick.
- Try not to touch your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water (for 20 seconds) or use hand sanitizer.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces, like keyboards, phones, remote controls and door handles, and thoroughly wash glasses and utensils.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze — or use the crook of your arm — and throw the tissue in the trash. Then wash your hands with soap and water.
- Get a [flu shot](#).
- Don't travel to places with widespread or sustained community transmission of the coronavirus. Reliable travel information can be found on the [CDC's travel advisory page](#) [↗](#).
- Practice healthy habits: Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids and eat nutritious food.

#### – Should I delay my treatment, surgery or radiation therapy?

Decisions about postponing cancer treatment must be made on an individual basis in consultation with your doctor. If you have questions or concerns, please contact your doctor's office.

#### – Will my clinical trial be canceled?

No. All therapeutic cancer clinical trials at UC San Diego Health are open for new patients and for continuation of treatment for patients currently on a study. We also continue to open new clinical trials to ensure that our patients can participate in the latest research. Cancer is not taking a timeout during COVID-19. Nor will we.

#### – How do I get my prescriptions?

Please contact your physician's office about opportunities for mailed prescriptions. We are also offering curbside prescription pickup at [Moores Cancer Center](#) in La Jolla.

#### – Is it OK to use valet parking, ride-sharing services and rental cars?

Yes, you can use antibacterial wipes to clean the steering wheel (if you're driving), door handles, gear shift, and any other buttons or levers that might have been touched by someone else.

– [Should I wear a mask?](#)

Yes, masks are a simple, but critical tactic, in slowing the spread of the virus, so [it's crucial we wear masks to protect ourselves and others](#) [↗](#). UC San Diego Health requires patients, visitors and staff in our facilities to wear face coverings or masks that cover the nose and mouth.

The CDC recommends that anyone who leaves their home for any purpose should wear a facial covering — such as a bandana, scarf or [homemade mask](#) [↗](#) — while maintaining social distancing and hand hygiene.

San Diego County health officials have mandated that people must wear masks in public settings when they're within 6 feet of other people. Businesses also must require their employees and others to wear a face covering at the workplace.

See [more information on masks and tips for achieving a proper fit](#).

– [Is Moores Cancer Center still offering support groups and classes?](#)

We recognize the importance of our classes and support groups and have worked to transition many of our in-person events to Zoom videoconferencing. Please visit [Cancer Services Patient and Family Events](#) to learn more.

See [all COVID-19 FAQs](#) and [frequently updated information about UC San Diego Health care and services](#).

