

## **Patients with IBD and Immunosuppressants - COVID 19 Gastroenterology**

This leaflet provides information regarding medication commonly used to treat Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) including Ulcerative colitis (UC), Crohn's disease (CD) and IBD type unknown (sometimes known as indeterminate colitis). Please read this leaflet if you are on one or more of the following medications to control your IBD.

- Steroids – Prednisolone, Budesonide, Beclometasone tablets
- Thiopurines – Azathioprine, Mercaptopurine
- Methotrexate
- Ciclosporin
- Anti-TNF drugs – Infliximab, Adalimumab, Golimumab
- Ustekinumab
- Vedolizumab
- Tofacitinib

You are advised to continue with your immunosuppressive treatment, this treatment does not increase the risk of being infected with Coronavirus (Covid-19), however, if you become infected you may have a more serious illness and are at higher risk of complications so you are advised to take action to reduce your risk of becoming infected (see below).

Any flare up of your IBD may make you unwell with the need to increase medication such as steroid treatment. This may increase your risk of Coronavirus (Covid-19) infection so the majority of patients with IBD are advised to continue their usual medication.

Many medications take weeks or months for the effects to fully leave the body meaning you increase the chance of a flare without reducing your chance of infection.

### **What can I do to lower my risk of catching Coronavirus?**

- Always carry tissues with you and use them to catch your cough or sneeze. Then bin the tissue, wash your hands with soap and water or use sanitiser gel.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water especially before meals and after using the toilet.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are unwell.
- Avoid non-essential travel or mixing with large groups of people.

### **What does self - isolating mean?**

In practical terms, this means that once you reach your residence you must:

- Stay at home
- Not go to work, school or public areas
- Not use public transport like buses, trains, tubes or taxis
- Avoid visitors at your home
- Ask friends, family members or delivery services to carry out errands for you – such as getting groceries, medications or other shopping.

### **Should I stop my immunosuppression treatment?**

- **NO** – you are advised to continue with your immunosuppressive treatment providing you have no symptoms of infection such as fever or cough.

- This treatment does not increase the risk of being infected with Coronavirus.
- If you stop taking your immunosuppressive medicine, you may have a flare which may increase your risk of needing medication such as steroids. This may increase your risk of serious infection or complications if you then become infected with Coronavirus.
- If you are at increased risk of infection, for example, if you have been in direct contact with an infected individual, have travelled to a high risk area, or have another serious comorbidity (health condition) that increases your risk further, you should seek advice by contacting your GP surgery by telephone or the IBD clinical nurse specialists, preferably by email [IBDHelp@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:IBDHelp@wales.nhs.uk) email (as this will enable the quickest response) although if this is not possible, please leave a message on the IBD Helpline – 01633 656055

### **Who should I contact if I am worried?**

Based on the available evidence, the current risk of infection in the UK is 'high'. If you have symptoms you are worried about you should contact NHS 111 for advice. If you have specific medication queries please get in touch with your IBD nurse, preferably via email or contact your GP surgery.

Please do this by telephone, do not go in person to a hospital or your GP unless you have been advised to do so.

Please keep an eye on the guidance from Crohn's and Colitis UK as the advice may change as the situation evolves [www.crohnsandcolitis.org.uk](http://www.crohnsandcolitis.org.uk)

Please also refer to the Public Health Wales website for up to date information [www.phw.nhs.wales](http://www.phw.nhs.wales) and search for Coronavirus.

**"This document is available in Welsh /  
Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg".**