



Guidance for Bone Marrow Failure Patients to Protect Against Coronavirus (COVID-19)

This content has been prepared in consultation with AAMDSIF Medical Advisory Board Chair Mikkael Sekeres MD, MS of Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, University of Miami and Co-Chair Olatoyosi Odenike MD of the University of Chicago. (January 2021)

While some states have relaxed policies on business openings and social distancing guidelines, COVID-19 infection rates and hospitalizations are rising in many states. Patients with bone marrow failure conditions are still at high risk of serious consequences if infected with COVID-19. We urge you to continue to practice social distancing, frequent hand washing and sanitizing, wearing masks around others, and encouraging others to wear masks around you.

As a person with a bone marrow failure condition, such as myelodysplastic syndromes, aplastic anemia, PNH, etc., you are already taking precautions to protect your compromised immune system. With the emergence of COVID-19, you and your caregivers should be especially vigilant to continue this preventive behavior:

- Always wear a mask that covers your mouth and nose when leaving the house. If you must go inside buildings other than your home, N-95 masks (or their equivalents) are the safest for you and others, followed by surgical masks, then cloth masks. Masks with vents and “gaiters” are not recommended.
- Refrain from touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Wash your hands often for at least 20 seconds with soap and water or using a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Discard the tissue and clean your hands. If a tissue is not available, cough or sneeze into your elbow.
- Avoid shaking hands with others.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick, and discourage people from visiting your home if they have any symptoms of illness.
- Avoid travel as much as possible.
- Avoid crowds and large gatherings, especially in poorly ventilated spaces.
- Contact your physician with any questions or concerns specific to your condition.
- Know where to go for COVID-19 testing, as some local clinics may not have the resources or facility to do the COVID-19 testing or even see you.
- If you have a fever, acetaminophen is preferred over ibuprofen for reducing a fever.

COVID-19 Vaccine Guidance

Patients with a bone marrow failure condition are encouraged to discuss getting vaccinated against the coronavirus in early 2021. The two approved vaccinations available in the United States and much of the rest of the world are mRNA vaccines which do not contain live virus and should be safe for most patients with a bone marrow failure condition. Please discuss this important topic with your treating hematologist/oncologist.

Should other vaccines become available, it is not recommended to get vaccinated with a live virus as this could cause problems for patients. Please consult your treating hematologist/oncologist about vaccinations and if you are pre or post transplant, it is critically important to discuss this with your transplant team and to strictly adhere to their schedule for vaccinations.

Guidance for Bone Marrow Failure Patients to Protect Against Coronavirus (COVID-19) (cont.)

Additional advice for patients during active and post-ATG treatment, bone marrow transplant recovery or other bone marrow failure therapy:

- Check with your doctor about keeping your regularly scheduled medical appointments—in general, do not skip your scheduled treatments. Medical centers are taking extra precautions to prevent the transmission of coronavirus. Many healthcare facilities are limiting visitors, so if a caregiver or family member is not allowed to accompany a patient to an appointment, they could listen in by phone to maintain communication with the provider.
- Since there may be blood shortages in some locations, it may be necessary to increase the time between transfusions if it can be tolerated.
- Wear a mask when leaving home—make sure it covers your nose and mouth completely.
- Continue to adhere to your neutropenic diet, if you follow one.
- Take steps to ensure you have a 3-month supply of your medication and possibly arrange mail order delivery of your meds.
- Be prepared to self-quarantine yourself for up to 14 days where necessary and consult your physician regarding ongoing blood transfusions and treatment.

For more information especially for those at higher risk for complications, visit the Centers for Disease Control: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/index.html>

Follow the latest updates from trusted sources:

- **Centers for Disease Control (CDC):** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>
- **Food and Drug Administration (FDA):** <https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/counterterrorism-and-emerging-threats/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>
- **National Institutes of Health (NIH):** <https://www.nih.gov/coronavirus>
- **World Health Organization (WHO):** <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

Guidelines from the American Society of Hematology (ASH)

ASH has released a number of guidelines that are geared toward healthcare providers but patients may find them useful and can be found at <https://www.hematology.org/covid-19> including specific information for patients with aplastic anemia, MDS, AML and MPNs.

AAMDSIF Website Resources

AAMDSIF has a number of webinars about COVID-19 and the specific concerns of bone marrow failure patients available on our website along with updated guidance, financial resources and Frequently Asked Questions at: www.aamds.org/education/covid-19

If you have questions about bone marrow disease, send an email to help@aamds.org or call (800) 747-2820, ext. 2. You can also follow AAMDSIF on Facebook at www.facebook.com/aamds.