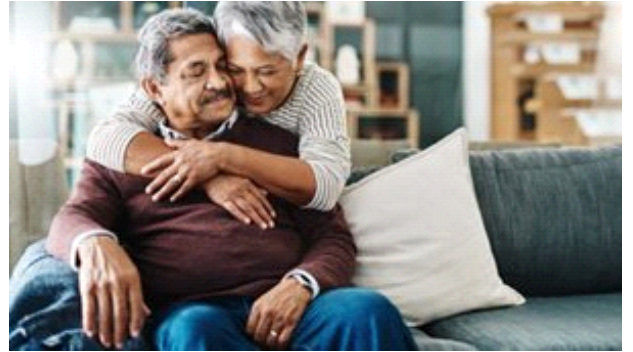


COVID-19 & Cancer

For patients with cancer, taking precautionary steps to avoid illnesses should be a habit. Patients with cancer have lowered immune systems due to treatment or to the cancer itself, so contracting COVID-19 or other illnesses can be dangerous. It is more important than ever before for those with and without cancer to minimize the risk of contracting or spreading illnesses because of the COVID-19 virus.



What Should I Ask My Doctor?

During this time, the way your cancer is treated or monitored may differ. How you treat or monitor side effects of treatment and the signs of getting sick may change too. A few important questions to ask your provider are:

- Does treatment of this cancer put me at higher risk of contracting COVID-19? Why or why not?
- Is it safe to start or continue treatment at this time? How long is it safe to delay treatment?
- Will the treatment center need to reschedule my appointment? If so, what are my options?
- What precautions do I need to take when I come in for treatment or check-ups?
- Is it safe to visit with family members and/or friends, or should I be isolated?

You and your provider should create a plan for how to monitor and treat your cancer during this time. Chemotherapy or immunotherapy infusions, radiation therapy or scans will still need you to come into the hospital or your clinic's office site.

If you had a cancer screening scheduled during this time, you may be urged to postpone your screening. However, your provider will help you decide what the best plan is at this time.

Precautionary Steps

While cancer patients are more susceptible to COVID-19 and other illnesses due to their immunocompromised status, there are steps that everyone can take to lower the chances of catching or spreading the virus.

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20-seconds.
- Practice social distancing. This is especially important for those with lowered immune systems including cancer patients.
- Limit or avoid person-to-person-contact and avoid those who look or feel ill.
- Stay home, especially if feeling ill!
- Maintain a healthy diet and regular exercise.

For cancer patients isolating at home with family members, it is important that those individuals follow the same prevention guidelines, frequent hand washing, social distancing, limiting contact, avoiding sick contacts. If anyone in the household has symptoms of a viral infection, they should self-isolate. Cancer patients who feel ill and have or may have been exposed to COVID-19 should contact their health care provider for guidance before going to a hospital or urgent care.

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NOTE: This information is provided to you as an educational service of National Jewish Health. It is not meant to be a substitute for consulting with your own physician.

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