



COVID-19: What People with Cancer Need to Know

What is COVID-19 (Coronavirus)?

COVID-19 is a new type of virus that can cause mild to severe infections in the lungs. Like other viruses, it can lead to serious infections for people with weakened immune systems. COVID-19 may cause more severe infections than other viruses. We do not have a vaccine to help control its spread, but experts are working to make a vaccine.

How does COVID-19 spread?

COVID-19 is a new disease and we are still learning how it spreads. The virus is thought to spread mainly from person to person:

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
- It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it, and then touching their mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

How can I protect myself?

These are some of the best ways to protect yourself and others from the virus:

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

- Use hand sanitizer with 60% or more alcohol until you can wash your hands with soap and water.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth without washing your hands first.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces often. Regular household wipes and sprays will kill the virus. Be sure to clean places that people touch a lot, such as door handles, phones, keyboards, and light switches.

- Avoid handshakes, hugging, and standing or sitting close to people who are coughing or sneezing.
- Be as healthy as you can. Get plenty of sleep, eat healthy, exercise, and manage your stress.

If you are sick, follow these steps:

- Stay home.
- Cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze. If you use a tissue, put it in the garbage right away. If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow crease.
- Call before going to your medical appointments. Let them know if you have a new onset fever. Also, let them know about recent travel or if you have had contact with a person with COVID-19.

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MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital
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MedStar Health Bel Air Medical Center
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MedStar Montgomery Medical Center
301-774-8697

MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center
301-877-5631

MedStar St. Mary's Hospital
240-434-7247

MedStar Washington Hospital Center
202-877-6998

Are there special concerns for people with cancer?

People with cancer can have weakened immune systems otherwise known as being immunocompromised. For people with cancer, this is usually due to treatment for their cancer, such as a bone marrow transplant, chemotherapy, or radiation therapy. Some people with cancer might have a higher risk of getting COVID-19 or having a serious infection from it. Do your best to follow the steps listed above to protect yourself. Ask your doctor or nurse if they have special recommendations based on your health or type of treatment. Call your doctor right away if any of these happen to you:

- You have a fever higher than 100.3 degrees F.
- You feel short of breath.
- You develop a cough, runny nose, or congestion.

Please monitor your temperature daily and call your medical provider if you see any changes.

Should I wear a mask?

Experts don't believe that wearing a mask is helpful for the general public. Some people should use certain types of masks because of their own health or the type of work they do. Talk to your doctor or nurse to see if you would benefit from wearing a mask. If you arrive at the hospital with respiratory symptoms, please ask for a mask.

What if I care for or live with a cancer patient?

If you are caring for or living with someone with cancer, do your best to keep them from getting the virus. Follow the steps to protect yourself listed on this sheet. If you become sick yourself, call your doctor to see what more you should do to protect your loved one.

What about people visiting?

If you are sick or have been exposed to COVID-19, we ask that you not come to our offices.

No visitor is permitted in our cancer infusion locations due to increased risk to immunocompromised patients; visitors may wait in their cars.

How will MedStar Health protect me from getting COVID-19?

Our hospital and clinics are taking steps to keep infected patients separate from those who may be at risk. At every appointment, your care team will ask questions about overall health and recent travel. We may ask some patients to wait in a separate room or to reschedule until they are feeling better if they have symptoms. We are also taking extra steps to clean and disinfect surfaces throughout our hospital and clinics. We provide "sanitation stations" at all entrances.

Will you still care for me if I get sick?

Yes. Your care is our top priority. Although we may change some ways we care for you, we will never put your care or health at risk.

For more information, please visit:
[MedStarHealth.org/COVID-19](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/COVID-19)

It's how we **treat people.**