

# Cancer Care Delivery Challenges Amidst Coronavirus Disease - 19 (COVID-19) Outbreak: Specific Precautions for Cancer Patients and Cancer Care Providers to Prevent Spread

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- Cancer patients are more susceptible to coronavirus infection than individuals without cancer as they are in an immunosuppressive state because of the malignancy and anticancer treatment.
- Countries must isolate, test, treat and trace to control the coronavirus pandemic.
- To date, there is no scientific guideline regarding management of cancer patients in a background of coronavirus outbreak.

- **Specific Precautions to prevent spread in cancer patients**
  - There is no specific guideline regarding the use of mask in cancer patients and this needed to be explored.
  - There is no specific guidance about COVID-19 testing in cancer patients.
  - Cancer patients must continue their treatment unless they are in close contact with someone with COVID-19 or presenting with symptoms of cough, shortness of breath, breathing difficulties or high temperature.

- **Cancer patients planned for Surgery**
  - Elective surgeries for cancer patients can be rescheduled if possible.
  
- **Cancer patients undergoing radiotherapy or planned for it**
  - Oncologists should decide to postpone, discontinue or modify radiation therapy.
  - risk/benefit assessment in mind

- **Cancer Patients on Immunosuppressive therapy or planned for it**
- There is no direct evidence to support changing or withholding chemotherapy, targeted therapy, and immunotherapy in cancer patients
  
- Some patients might switch from intravenous chemotherapy to oral drugs or some may consider home infusion of chemotherapy to minimize the risk of infection.
  
- **Cancer patients planned for Stem Cell transplantation**
- Planned allogeneic stem cell transplantation can be reasonably delayed in view of coronavirus outbreaks
  
- **Role of prophylactic Antiviral therapy**
- There is no evidence or published guidelines regarding the use of prophylactic antiviral therapy for COVID-19 in immunosuppressed patients.

- Recommendation regarding cancer screening
  - to postpone
- Cancer patients on follow up
  - cancer patients on regular follow up can avoid hospital visits

# COVID-19 and Cancer Care Providers

- Handwashing
- Cover your mouth with a tissue
- Avoid touching face
- 1 meter distance between you and others
- Avoid crowded spaces, especially indoors.
- Avoid contact with anyone who is ill with a cough , fever or difficulty in breathing
- Do not share objects that touch your mouth
- social distancing
- Do not shake hands.

# General Protection steps for cancer care providers (WHO, 2020, March 20)

- Cancer Care providers should follow standard precautions like hand and respiratory hygiene , safe waste management, sterilization of equipments , etc.
- Ensure all patients should cover their mouth and nose if they cough or sneeze.
- Arrange separate rooms for admission of suspected COVID-19 cancer patients or keep at least 1-meter distance between beds in ward admissions.
- Cancer care providers should wear clean sterile , protective personal equipment.
- Limit the use of aerosol generator procedures for cancer patients like intubations.
- Use of screening questionnaire for the detection of suspected coronavirus cases.
- Perform hand hygiene after visiting every patient



# Myths, misinformation and correlating facts

## Extra Protection for Cancer Patients

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### Do's

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Tell visitors not to call if they have any symptoms of coronavirus to avoid unnecessary panic

Meet people in a well-ventilated room or outdoors.

Ask visitors to wash their hands properly.

Ask visitors to keep a space of at least 2 meters between you and them.

Make a joint plan with family, friends, and neighbors for the support you need now, or if you become unwell.

Refill your prescription medications and have over-the-counter medicines and supplies, for example, tissues and a thermometer

Keep physically active, if possible.

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### Don't's

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Do not have any more than 2 visitors at a time to your home.

Do not shake hands with visitors.

Do not isolate yourself from friends and family.

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Note: Extra protection is required for cancer patients who are older than 75 years but can be followed by all cancer patients on treatment

Myths/Misinformation	Facts
Only older people are affected with coronavirus	People with age >60 years with pre-existing conditions like diabetes, heart problems are more vulnerable, but young persons can also get infected.
Coronavirus is transmitted by mosquito bites	No evidence to prove transmission by mosquitoes.
Spraying alcohol or chlorine kills the coronavirus	Though, these are used as disinfectants, spraying these on the body will not kill the coronavirus. In fact, chemicals can harm your body.
Coronavirus can't survive in snow and cold weather	No evidence suggests that coronavirus cannot survive in cold weather. COVID-19 can be transmitted in all areas, including areas with hot and humid weather.
Eating garlic prevents the coronavirus infection	Garlic has some antimicrobial properties, but there is no evidence which suggests that it checks the infection with coronavirus.
Drinking water in high volume flushes out the coronavirus.	There is no scientific evidence that supports consuming water in large volumes can help individuals flush out the coronavirus.
Hot bath prevents the coronavirus infection	Taking a hot bath does not prevent the new coronavirus disease
Hand Dryers can kill the coronavirus	Hand dryers are not effective in killing coronavirus
Ultraviolet Lamps can minimize surface contamination with coronavirus	It should not be used to sterilize hands or other areas of skin as it may cause skin irritation
Thermal Scanners can detect the COVID-19	Thermal scanners are effective in measuring skin temperature only, not for screening of COVID-19.
Taking antibiotics can prevent the coronavirus infection	Antibiotics work only on bacteria, not against viruses. Antibiotics should not be used as a means of prevention or treatment of coronavirus.
Vaccines against pneumonia can protect from coronavirus	The vaccines against pneumonia (Pneumococcal and H influenza b vaccine) do not provide any protection against novel coronavirus
Specific medicine use against the coronavirus	There is no proven medicine that is recommended for the prevention or treatment of coronavirus.
Rinsing nose with saline can protect from the coronavirus infection	No research finding that suggests that rinsing the nose with normal saline protects people from coronavirus
Cow Urine can flush out the coronavirus	No scientific evidence that supports consuming cow urine can help individuals to flush out the virus.