

Coronavirus (COVID-19) – information for children, young people and families from the Rheumatology team

We understand that you might be worried about coronavirus – also known as COVID-19 – particularly if your child has a long-term health condition, such as arthritis, lupus, myositis, vasculitis or other rheumatology condition. This information sheet from the Rheumatology team at Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) sets out our advice for children and young people who use our services.

Please read this alongside our general FAQs for families at gosh.nhs.uk/covid-19-FAQ. You can also find the latest news, information and resources in our COVID-19 information hub at gosh.nhs.uk/coronavirus-hub.

This guidance aligns with that of the British Society of Rheumatology and the British Society of Paediatric and Adolescent Rheumatology, and has been approved by the clinical team at GOSH.

Does COVID-19 affect children?

The evidence to date shows that although children do develop COVID-19, very few children will develop severe infection with COVID-19. There is no evidence to date that children with a rheumatology condition are at increased risk of catching COVID-19.

However, children and young people who are taking steroids or having biologic medications may be at increased risk for any viral disease.

We have followed Government advice in identifying families where a child or young person should practice 'shielding' for 12 weeks, as outlined on the NHS Government website. These

families will have received a letter from GOSH outlining the precautions their child needs to take. You can find special guidance on what shielding means for children at gosh.nhs.uk/covid-19-and-vulnerable-children.

If you have not received a letter from GOSH about shielding your child, this was decided by your clinical team after careful consideration of national guidance. It may help to visit the websites below (CCAA.org.uk, and rheumatology.org.uk) for more information on which groups of rheumatology patients are being advised to shield or isolate.

If your child has any additional or new medical problems, please seek advice from the other clinical teams involved in their care.

You can access urgent medical advice by calling NHS 111 or using the online service at 111.nhs.uk.



If you are very worried about your child, you should call 999 or take them to A&E, as you normally would.

Specific advice about medicines from the Rheumatology team

It is very important that your child continues to take their medication as normal. This is very important, and not taking it could make their condition worse. Please consult your specialty team before making any decisions regarding your child's medication.

Please remember patients on long-term glucocorticoids (steroids, prednisolone) should not stop these suddenly. If you and your clinical team are planning for your child to start or switch to a new medication, this may now be reviewed. We will contact you to discuss any changes. Some medications are being switched from infusion to injection, to allow them to be given at home.

If you think your child may have an infection, contact your clinical team to let them know.

Immunosuppressive therapy may need to be paused for the duration of the infection and until they feel well. This will be done in careful consultation with their rheumatology team. This may mean that infusions or treatments are postponed until they feel better.

Should we make alternative clinic appointments?

Clinicians have tried to reduce the need for patients to attend face-to-face appointments wherever possible. This may mean your child is offered a telephone appointment or video consultation.

If your child has an upcoming clinic appointment, we will be in touch with you to discuss how we can best carry this out remotely.

If your child/young person is unwell and needs to be seen, we are still here to support you and can arrange for the Rheumatology team to see them at GOSH

Further information and support

Advice for rheumatology patients

www.versusarthritis.org/news/2020/march/coronavirus-covid-19-what-is-it-and-where-to-go-for-information/

www.ccaa.org.uk/coronavirus-support-resources/

<https://www.rheumatology.org.uk/News-Policy/Details/Covid19-Coronavirus-update-members>

General advice and support

GOSH COVID-19 Hub at <https://www.gosh.nhs.uk/news/coronavirus-covid-19-information-hub>

Information from the NHS at www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/

Information from Royal College Paediatrics and Child Health for parents and carers at www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/covid-19-resources-parents-carers

Information for children is available on the BBC Newsround website at www.bbc.co.uk/newsround

