



## American College of Gastroenterology Inflammatory Bowel Disease and COVID-19 Patient Information

What we know about COVID-19 and Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) and how you can stay healthy during the current pandemic:

### What is it?

SARS-CoV-2 is a new coronavirus that is infecting people around the world. When SARS-CoV-2 causes symptoms and disease, it is called COVID-19 for “coronavirus disease, 2019.”

Coronaviruses are very common and usually cause coughs and colds; however, this particular type is causing more severe illness and death in a subset of patients. Based on our current knowledge and testing abilities, up to 20% of people infected have a more serious form of the virus.

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) assessed COVID-19 as a pandemic. This means the disease is affecting people around the world in a way that is difficult to control.

1. Most patients who develop COVID-19 have a mild course and recover quickly. The groups who have more complications and risks include the elderly (over age 65) and patients with lung or heart disease or diabetes. Limited data in 9 pregnant women in China suggest that they and their babies did well.
2. IBD itself does not increase the risk of COVID-19.
3. Being on immune therapies for IBD may increase the risk for some infections, but the currently available information does not show an increased risk of infection with SARS-CoV-2 or development of COVID-19 in individuals with IBD or who are on the standard therapies. However, it is helpful to clarify which medications affect the immune system and which ones do not.
  - a. Immunosuppressive agents include:
    - Steroids: prednisone, budesonide (Entocort<sup>®</sup>, Uceris<sup>®</sup>)
    - Immunomodulators: azathioprine (Imuran<sup>®</sup>, Azasan<sup>®</sup>), 6-mercaptopurine (Purinethol<sup>®</sup>), methotrexate (Rheumatrex<sup>®</sup>, Trexal<sup>®</sup>)
    - Anti-TNF: infliximab (Remicade<sup>®</sup>, Inflectra<sup>®</sup>, Renflexis<sup>®</sup>, Ixifi<sup>®</sup>, Avsola<sup>®</sup>), adalimumab (Humira<sup>®</sup>), golimumab (Simponi<sup>®</sup>), certolizumab pegol (Cimzia<sup>®</sup>)
    - Anti-IL12/23: ustekinumab (Stelara<sup>®</sup>)
    - Anti-integrin: vedolizumab (Entyvio<sup>®</sup>), natalizumab (Tysabri<sup>®</sup>)
    - JAK inhibitor: tofacitinib (Xeljanz<sup>®</sup>)
  - b. Treatments that do NOT suppress your immune system:
    - 5-aminosalicylates: mesalamine (Asacol<sup>®</sup>, Apriso<sup>®</sup>, Lialda<sup>®</sup>, Pentasa<sup>®</sup>) balsalazide (Giazo<sup>®</sup>, Colazal<sup>®</sup>), olsalazine (Dipentum<sup>®</sup>), sulfasalazine
    - Antibiotics (ciprofloxacin, metronidazole)
    - Dietary interventions (elemental diet used primarily in pediatrics)
4. Keeping your IBD in remission is believed to be protective against COVID-19, but also healthier for you. Needing steroids or hospitalization for a relapse is never an ideal situation, but especially now when medical resources may be strained.

5. Stay on your IBD medications. Flares or needing to take steroids may put you at greater risk than taking your other IBD medications.
6. Follow the CDC guidelines including:
  - a. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after being in public or after coughing, blowing your nose or sneezing.
  - b. If soap/water are not available, use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Make sure all surfaces of hands are cleaned and dry.
  - c. Do not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
7. We know that this infection is very contagious and there is currently no vaccine. Therefore:
  - a. Avoid non-essential travel
  - b. Prevent exposure by staying home and practicing social distancing. This means:
    - Avoid gathering with others (more than 10 people as per the CDC) in a closed space
    - Keep a distance of 6 feet between yourself and others
    - Avoid sick people
  - c. Consult with your physician to determine if appointments for outpatient visits or endoscopy are warranted at this time.
  - d. If you need to see your health care provider, find out if it can be done virtually (telehealth).
8. If you develop symptoms of fever, cough, respiratory symptoms (shortness of breath) or new onset diarrhea, be sure to call your healthcare team for guidance.

#### **For more information**

- The COVID-19 situation is constantly changing, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) website is a good place for reliable information <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- Information about COVID-19 from the American College of Gastroenterology can be found at [www.gi.org/COVID19](http://www.gi.org/COVID19)

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