

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and CLL patients

Statement of the CLL Advocates Network

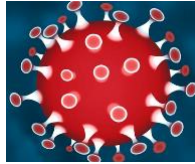
Date: 09 July 2020 (Version 3 – updated based on current guidelines)

At the time of this writing, the world has been dealing with infections caused by the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV2 known as COVID-19 for only about a half year. Furthermore, nearly all the research that has been reported so far has been on non-cancer patients. There are just very few data on CLL and COVID-19, though that is changing fast. Accordingly, information and guidelines are also changing fast. While it is the [CLL Advocates Network's](#) wish to provide extra advice specifically for CLL patients, this statement will mostly serve to signpost readers to reliable linked sources that can be counted on to be frequently updated.

There are however a few COVID-19 facts that do seem increasingly certain at this time and that we wish to share with you.

TAKEAWAYS

- Cancer patients in general and CLL patients in particular are at significantly higher risk for a more serious and complicated course with COVID-19.
- Many CLL patients may have a mild or moderate infection and most will survive the infection, but outcome is not fully known yet since data is not yet mature.
- SARS-CoV2 is primarily spread through the air (carriers coughing, shouting, sneezing, etc.). Transmission may also occur indirectly through touching surfaces in the immediate environment or objects contaminated with virus from an infected person, followed by touching the mouth, nose, or eyes ([see WHO Reference for details](#)).
- People can spread the infection who have no or few mild symptoms.
- Adopting good personal hygiene practices and following general public health recommendations has proven most effective against COVID-19. These include:
 - Frequent and proper **hand washing**
 - **Sneezing and coughing into your arm/elbow**
 - **Keeping surfaces clean and disinfected**
 - **Not touching your face** when your hands are not thoroughly washed
 - **No shaking hands**
 - **Avoiding large crowds**
 - **Maintaining physical distance of at least 1 metre (3 feet) or perhaps 1.8 metres (6 feet) and wearing masks** – both lower the risk of transmission for all.



- **Choose outdoor spaces** over indoor spaces since the latter are more risky (less ventilation, harder to keep people apart).
- In many countries, it's current practice for health care providers to use personal protective equipment (PPE). Repeated testing of HCP and social care workers is also proving of great importance in preventing infections, though there is still high need to scaling up testing capacities.
- We are learning more, and treatments are improving, but SARS-CoV2 remains a contagious and deadly disease, and evidence is showing that it remains at large in the community. Therefore, CLL patients should be especially vigilant.

COPING STRATEGIES

The coronavirus outbreak has caused major disruptions to daily life and we are all feeling these changes deeply. We all need to learn how to navigate successfully in this new environment. The [CDC](#) provides [practical guidance on how to cope with COVID-19 in our daily life and how to stay safe when going out](#), including running errands, visiting parks, using transportation, travelling, etc. If you decide to venture out into public setting, we recommend checking out these recommendations.

With COVID-19, many of us are struggling with disquieting thoughts and feeling concerned for vulnerable populations. COVID-19 is a fast-moving, ever-shifting precipitant of anxiety that can send us spiralling quickly. It is helpful to develop some strategies to cope with mental stress during this ongoing pandemic.

Below you will find websites with interesting tips and advice on how to look after our mental health:

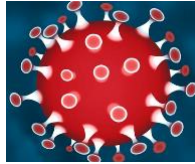
- [WHO \(#Healthy at Home - Looking after our mental health\)](#)
(Information available in various languages)
- [Psychology Today \(7 Ways to Cope With COVID-19\)](#)

SELECTED RELIABLE SOURCES OF INFORMATION

COVID-19 and CLL specific information

- ASH (American Society of Hematology) FAQs: <https://www.hematology.org/covid-19/covid-19-and-cll>
- CLL Society COVID-19 updates: <https://cllsociety.org/covid-19/>

COVID-19 and cancer information



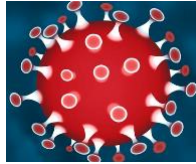
- Blood cancer UK: <https://bloodcancer.org.uk/support-for-you/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-blood-cancer/>
- Cancer research UK: <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/cancer-in-general/coronavirus>
- Leukaemia Care UK: <https://www.leukaemiacare.org.uk/support-and-information/latest-from-leukaemia-care/blog/shielding-for-people-with-blood-cancers-faqs/>
- NIH (National Institutes of Health) USA: <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/coronavirus/coronavirus-cancer-patient-information>
- ASCO (American Society of Clinical Oncology): <https://www.cancer.net/blog/2020-06/common-questions-about-covid-19-and-cancer-answers-patients-and-survivors>
- German DGHO (German Society of Haematology and Oncology) <https://www.dgho.de/aktuelles/news/news/2020/coronavirus-covid-19-bei-krebspatienten>
- Onkopedia (a guideline portal for practising doctors in Germany, for CLL-specific information see chapter 6.2.13 Chronische Lymphatische Leukämie (CLL)) <https://www.onkopedia.com/de/onkopedia/guidelines/coronavirus-infektion-covid-19-bei-patienten-mit-blut-und-krebserkrankungen/@@guideline/html/index.html>

General COVID-19 information & information for vulnerable populations

- CDC (Center for Disease Control- USA): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>
- WHO (World Health Organization): <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
- UW (Univ. of Washington) IDEA program- Treatment and Clinical Trials: <https://covid.idea.medicine.uw.edu>
- Johns Hopkins COVID-19 Dashboard mapping global cases: <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6>
- Government of Canada <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/vulnerable-populations-covid-19.html>

Also please check with your appropriate local national and regional health and governmental authorities as to your particular circumstances, regulations and guidelines.

The [CLL Advocates Network](#) offers no medical advice. We ask you to check our recommendations with your local professionals and authorities.



BE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOURSELF AND OTHERS

The more public life is opening up in certain countries and parts of the world, and the more coronavirus restrictions are being loosened, the more it becomes a citizen's personal responsibility and duty to assess his or her individual risk of contracting (and spreading) COVID-19. A realistic risk assessment is especially important for the immune depressed.

PLEASE HELP US AND KEEP...

- Advocating and raising awareness with your local government and healthcare providers.
- Reminding your local Health Policy decision makers and other stakeholders of the high risk patients with haematological malignancies.
- Sharing best practices.

Stay safe!

Your *CLL Advocates Network Team*
Contact us at info@clladvocates.net
Tag us on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#)!