

## COVID-19 and Cancer Survivors: What Do I Need to Know?

COVID-19 is a new virus that has now spread across the world. We know that this virus has caused worry for everyone. For survivors of childhood, adolescent, and young adult cancers, we know that the worry may be even higher.

**As a cancer survivor, you should take extra precautions.** Below, you will find some facts that will lessen your chance of catching the infection or transmitting it to others, and will help you know what to do if you think you may have COVID-19.

### How is the COVID-19 virus spread?

- The virus is spread by coming in contact with droplets from the respiratory system of an infected person.
- These droplets can spew out of an infected person's nose or mouth (such as when they speak, cough or sneeze) and they can travel about 6 feet.
- The droplets then can stay on surfaces where they land, such as on countertops. Or if the infected person has touched the droplets with their hands (such as when wiping their nose, or covering their mouth when they cough), the droplets can be transferred to other surfaces, such as door knobs, light switches, phones, keyboards, water faucets, gas pump handles, etc.
- If an infected droplet comes in contact with your eyes, nose, or mouth, it can cause you to become infected. This includes whether the droplet comes directly from the infected person, or whether you touch an infected surface.

### How can I protect myself from getting infected?

- **Follow the principles of social distancing:**
  - Keep 6 feet of distance between you and other people, if at all possible
  - Avoid social gatherings and crowds of people
  - Avoid mass transit (such as buses and subways)
  - Stay at home as much as possible, and stay away from anyone who is sick
- **Practice good hygiene:**
  - Wash your hands very frequently – at least once an hour when you are awake – with soap and water for at least 20 seconds each time. This includes while you are at home.
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
  - Clean high-touch surfaces, such as phones, keyboards, doorknobs, light switches, and countertops using antibacterial wipes or household cleaners at least once a day
  - Do not shake hands or hug other people
  - Do not share household items (such as cups and towels) with others

- **Take good care of yourself:**

- Eat right
- Get plenty of sleep
- Reduce stress as much as possible
- If you work or go to school, ask to work or take classes at home. Get a letter from your health care provider to support this, if needed.

## What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

- **The most common symptoms are:**

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing

- **Symptoms may also include:**

- Tiredness
- Aches
- Runny nose
- Sore throat

## What should I do if I am not feeling well and think that I may have COVID-19?

- Call ahead for medical advice before visiting your health care provider or hospital, so that you can determine what next steps are needed
- Be sure to tell your health care provider that you are a cancer survivor
- If you have chronic health conditions (for example, heart or lung problems), be sure to tell your health care provider
- If you have been told that the cancer treatment you received places you at high risk for lung or heart problems (such as from chest radiation or certain chemotherapies), be sure to tell your health care provider
- Bring your cancer treatment summary with you if you are told to go to the clinic or hospital

## Is there anything else I can do?

- We recognize that this is a stressful time for everyone
- COVID-19 information continues to change daily
- Please talk to your survivorship care team about any questions or worries you may have during this time

Additional health information for childhood cancer survivors is available at  
[www.survivorshipguidelines.org](http://www.survivorshipguidelines.org)

**Note:** Throughout this *Health Links* series, the term “childhood cancer” is used to designate pediatric cancers that may occur during childhood, adolescence, or young adulthood. Health Links are designed to provide health information for survivors of pediatric cancer, regardless of whether the cancer occurred during childhood, adolescence, or young adulthood.

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**Introduction to Late Effects Guidelines and Health Links:** *The Long-Term Follow-Up Guidelines for Survivors of Childhood, Adolescent, and Young Adult Cancers* and accompanying *Health Links* were developed by the Children's Oncology Group as a collaborative effort of the Late Effects Committee and Nursing Discipline and are maintained and updated by the Children's Oncology Group's Long-Term Follow-Up Guidelines Core Committee and its associated Task Forces.

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