

Last updated 3/20/20

### **How is coronavirus transmitted?**

Coronaviruses spread via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person sneezes or coughs and can infect people in close contact (within 6 feet). Touching contaminated surfaces before touching your eyes/nose/mouth might also lead to infection. There has been concern that COVID19 may be in feces, so handwashing is vital.

### **What do we know about COVID19 in IBD patients?**

COVID19 has been in Europe and China prior to arriving in the US, so we can learn from our colleagues how other people with IBD have experienced COVID. There is an international registry to track outcomes of IBD patients who are infected with Covid19. As of March 17, 2020, there have been 7 reports of COVID in IBD patients, all in adults, with no deaths and only one hospitalization which did not require ICU level care. Also, younger people seem to be less severely affected.

### **What are the current recommendations for IBD patients related to COVID19?**

IBD occurs as a result of an overly active immune system, thus many of the medications used to treat IBD suppress the immune system. Some patients have asked if they should stop their medications. We do not advocate stopping medications as this could lead to an IBD flare and associated abdominal pain and diarrhea, which if significant may require a clinic or hospital visit to treat your IBD leading to unnecessary risk of COVID19 exposure. Medicines such as mesalamine (brand names include Asacol, Apriso, Balsalazide, Lialda, Pentasa) are all safe as they do not suppress the immune system. Steroids such as prednisone/prednisolone are judiciously prescribed so if you and your doctor have decided that you need them, then you should continue to take them as prescribed. You should not stop taking steroids abruptly as this can lead to devastating effects including a rapid drop in blood pressure. Topically administered steroids such as budesonide (Entocort and Uceris) cortenemas, hydrocortisone suppositories have minimal absorption into the bloodstream are not likely to suppress the immune system. Thiopurines (6-mercaptopurine, azathioprine) and tofacitinib inhibit the body's immune response to viral infections. The thiopurines take months to leave the body. Thus, stopping these medications will not help in the short term and may lead to worsening disease. The biologics we currently use to treat IBD such as anti-TNFs [Cimzia-certolizumab pegol, Humira-adalimumab, Remicade-infliximab or biosimilars (Inflectra, Remsima, Renflexis) Simponi-golimumab), ustekinumab (Stelara), vedolizumab (Entyvio)] are generally safe. At present we do not recommend stopping these medications. Moreover, in many cases the effect of these medications in the body lasts for months. There is some discussion that biologic therapy for IBD in particular anti-TNF antibodies may have some protective effects potentially by blunting the immune response which leads to excess mucous production and subsequent breathing difficulties. Additionally, sometimes steroids are used to decrease mucous production in pneumonia so they may also be somewhat protective.

Additional recommendations for **everyone** including people with IBD in order to limit viral transmission and protect each other:

- 1 Practice social distancing -maintain a minimum of 6-foot distance from other people.
- 2 Avoid any contact with sick people - those with cough/fever/sneezing.
- 3 Wash your hands and use hand sanitizer frequently - sing Happy Birthday or Mary Had a Little Lamb to make sure you are washing for an adequate amount of time.
- 4 Avoid touching your nose, eyes and mouth.
- 5 Call your pediatrician or gastroenterologist in case of fever, cough or difficulty breathing.
- 6 Disinfect surfaces prior to eating, especially in public areas since these viruses survive longer on surfaces

## What should I do to prepare for COVID19?

Given the potential for an outbreak within a community that may require people to stay home for a prolonged period of time, the CDC recommends that patients with chronic medical conditions and families are adequately prepared. People should have extra medication, extra medical supplies or equipment, and sufficient over the counter medications for treatment of fever or other symptoms. Families should plan to have enough household items and groceries on hand – ideally for at least 2-4 weeks. Families of immunocompromised patients should also have a plan in place for contacting healthcare providers if they become sick during this time.

For more information, the above summary was compiled with information from the following sources:

1. <https://gutsandgrowth.com/>
2. [ESPGHAN COVID19 Case Report Page](#)
3. <https://www.ioibd.org/ioibd-update-on-covid19-for-patients-with-crohns-disease-and-ulcerative-colitis/>
4. <https://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org/coronavirus/what-ibd-patients-should-know>
5. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

## Should I postpone or reschedule my injection or infusion?

As noted, it is recommended to continue your current IBD therapy, even if this includes immunosuppression.

## What should I do if I develop symptoms of coronavirus?

Like everyone, people with IBD should follow the advice of public health officials. As always, we do not recommend use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (e.g., NSAIDs, such as ibuprofen, Motrin, Advil, naproxen, Aleve, etc.) as these medications may trigger an IBD flare. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) is preferred for fever and pain control. If you are symptomatic and planning to seek medical care, then you should contact your pediatrician or gastroenterologist for guidance before coming to the clinic, urgent care or the emergency room.

## What can I do if I am home or on quarantine?

We know that mindfulness, meditation, exercise and adequate sleep are helpful for patients with IBD and this a good opportunity to prioritize self-care. Please consider practicing meditation, mindfulness and yoga using the following resources or taking a walk outside with your dog (who can't get corona virus) - but don't forget about social distancing! Note many apps have free trials! YouTube is free - skip the ads (to be clear we are not endorsing that stuff) Also structure your day get up and go to bed at the same time, stay active and get your learn on!

### Yoga to Stay Active

Yoga for Teens: 9 Poses for Calming <http://www.yogjournal.com/poses/yoga-by-benefit/calm/start-stress-free-9-poses-beat-back-school-jitters/>

10 Poses to Quiet Anxiety [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/05/19/yoga-for-anxiety-10-poses\\_n\\_3281986.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/05/19/yoga-for-anxiety-10-poses_n_3281986.html)

10 Yoga poses for instant Energy - FIT from WebMD <http://fit.webmd.com/teen/move/slideshow/slideshow-yoga-for-energy>

Easy Yoga Poses for Teens - Youtube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ph-zDXZHfQE>

Introducing Yoga into the Lives of Teens <http://www.lianalowenstein.com/articleProfYoga.pdf>

User Friendly yoga and meditation <https://www.youtube.com/user/yogawithadriene>

Yoga for Beginners with Adrienne <https://youtu.be/OeJoUIBhLkE>

School Age kid friendly yoga and mindfulness <https://adventuresofsuperstretch.com>

### Mindfulness Apps

<https://www.headspace.com>

<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/breathe2relax/id425720246>

<https://apps.apple.com/us/developer/omg-i-can-meditate-inc/id920161005>  
Yoga at BCH IBD center!! <https://discoveries.childrenshospital.org/yoga-to-manage-stress-and-ibd/>

### **For Parents: How do I talk with my child or teen about COVID-19? \***

- NPR
  - [Just for Kids: A Comic Exploring The New Coronavirus](#)  
A resource for children about coronavirus, what it is and how to protect oneself.
- National Association of School Psychologists
  - [Talking to Children About COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\): A Parent Resource](#)  
A resource for parents on how best to talk to children about the coronavirus.
- Psychology Today
  - How to Talk to Your Kids about COVID-19. 7 practical steps for helping your children feel safe, not scared. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hope-resilience/202003/how-talk-your-kids-about-covid-19>
- New York Times
  - [Talking to Teens and Tweens about Coronavirus](#)  
This article details advice from experts on how parents can help teens be prepared and have the right information about the coronavirus.

\*from Cleveland clinic children's center for behavioral health

Best Wishes,  
Your IBD Team