

Chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (CLL) patients and COVID-19

We know that a lot of the information about COVID-19 for the general public does not answer the concerns of people with CLL. The UKCLL forum has produced this information leaflet to provide extra advice for CLL patients. Unfortunately, all CLL patients have weakened immune systems as a result of the CLL (including untreated patients). Treatment can add to this immune weakness. People with reduced immunity are at greater risk of catching & being affected by COVID-19 than the general population. The virus affects the respiratory system, so the main risks are lung infection. There are no treatments or vaccines for COVID-19 so we cannot offer treatments to prevent people from getting it. What we can do is reduce the risk of spreading it. Like the common cold, COVID-19 infection usually occurs through close contact with a person with the virus, via cough, sneezes or hand contact. Washing your hands frequently reduces the contamination risk.

The main action you can take is to reduce your exposure risk. It is safer for people with reduced immunity to avoid hospitals & GP surgeries as far as possible. Doctors are therefore looking at clinic lists to see if people could have a telephone consultation instead. You will be notified if there are any changes to your hospital appointments. We would recommend the following measures to try to reduce your risk of exposure to COVID-19 as much as possible until the pandemic is over;

Shielding- As CLL puts you at a higher risk from Covid-19, you are strongly advised to stay at home at all times for a period of 12 weeks. You should not leave your house and should not have contact with any people outside of your household. Visits from people who provide essential support to you such as healthcare, personal support with daily needs or social care should continue but carers and care workers must stay away if they have any symptoms of the virus. All people coming to your house should wash their hands on arrival at your house and frequently while they are there. Some people with CLL are well and performing essential functions. It is possible that some patients may not receive a letter from NHS England advising them to shield. The UKCLL Forum strongly advises all patients with CLL to shield themselves, even key workers. Please share this notification with your line manager at work to support your request

If you think you might be experiencing symptoms and have been exposed to the virus, you should follow the same instructions as those for the general public & phone NHS 111; in addition inform your haematology care team. Make sure you tell the person you speak to about your CLL & treatment. If on chemotherapy you should also phone your normal chemotherapy helpline so they are aware.

Work -You are strongly advised to stay at home for 12 weeks and should not go to work. You can work from home if this is feasible.

Foreign Travel- don't travel and you should avoid seeing any family or friends with a recent travel history abroad for at least 2 weeks after their return.

Treatment; chemotherapy & immunotherapy- After discussion with you, your consultant may recommend deferring or delaying treatment if they feel it is in your best interest. Please do not stop any treatment for CLL without discussing this with your consultant or a member of their team first.

We want to reassure you that doctors & nurses are doing all they can to ensure that they can continue your care & treatment safely. If you have specific questions about your treatment or hospital appointments please get in touch with your local team.

COVID Survey- open to all, please fill in the survey <https://forms.gle/3KcPk956GbuXKoTK9>

For the latest NHS information:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/common-questions/>

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable-guidance>