

HSE COVID 19: Information about your Medicines. March 20th 2020

Advice for patients taking immunosuppressive medicines

We understand that patients under the care of rheumatologists, dermatologists and gastroenterologists who are currently on immunosuppressive medicines (such as biologic agents, steroids, methotrexate and azathioprine) are feeling particularly vulnerable and anxious due to the novel Coronavirus disease Covid-19.

There is currently no evidence to stop immunosuppressive medicines during the COVID-19 pandemic. If you stop your medicine you may be more likely to have a flare of your condition during this period.

The HSE advises:

1. Steroid Treatment

If you are taking steroid tablets e.g. prednisolone (Deltacortril) for any condition, it is very important to continue taking them, unless your doctor advises any change. Stopping steroids suddenly can make you very unwell.

If you become unwell

- If you have symptoms of a viral infection such as cough, shortness of breath, breathing difficulties or fever (high temperature), **keep taking steroids** if you are usually on them.
- Never start taking steroids unless your doctor tells you to.

2. Immunosuppressive Treatments

If you attend a consultant, you can discuss with them whether they recommend any changes to your immunosuppressive treatment but do not make changes unless your doctor tells you to.

Information from studies so far do not show that being on an immunosuppressive treatment puts you at higher risk of severe disease.

If you usually have regular blood tests, these should continue as advised.

If you become unwell

- Seek advice with your GP or consultant before taking the next dose of your immunosuppressive treatments.

The Covid-19 pandemic may last several months. If you reduce or stop your medicine you may be more likely to have a flare of your condition during this period. This means you might need to restart your treatment and attend your GP or hospital.

The HSE, along with our clinical disease experts, is constantly reviewing new information and international guidelines to best advise our patients.

Information on the virus and the disease that causes COVID-19 is rapidly changing and the above information is accurate as of today's date. The situation regarding COVID-19 and its prevention and treatment is being closely monitored by the HSE. Regular updates are available on website www.hse.ie/coronavirus