

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS on COVID-19 and Cancer

Questions	Answers
How does COVID-19 impact access to cancer screening.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is likely that routine screening appointments, for example cervical screening tests and mammograms, will be postponed during COVID-19 outbreak especially in settings where there is community transmission</li> <li>• Delaying cancer screening on the order of months is not likely have a negative impact, as there is significant benefit in avoiding COVID-19 transmission in health care settings</li> <li>• Anyone with symptoms suggestive of cancer, should contact their health care provider to seek advice and should not delay receiving evaluation and care</li> </ul>
Impact of COVID-19 on diagnostic and staging procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tests to diagnose or stage cancer might be delayed if the risk of infection with COVID-19 outweighs the benefits of the tests. This might apply to patients who have shown suspicious signs of a cancer that are low-risk of rapid progression, such as minor abnormalities on mammography. This should be discussed on a case-by-case basis.</li> <li>• In some patients, staging procedures may be limited to those that are the most crucial to guide treatment.</li> </ul>
Impact of COVID-19 on cancer treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cancer treatment plans may be adapted in order to minimize the risks to health resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. People with cancer should be sensitized to changes in decision-making and encouraged to communicate routinely with their providers to avoid perception that their cancer care is being ignored.</li> <li>• The adaptation strategy may differ depending on the therapeutic goal; for example, curative treatment may continue as planned to ensure the best chance of remission. When the risks of the COVID-19 virus outweigh any potential benefit of receiving cytotoxic or immunosuppressive treatments, such as for individuals with advanced or end-stage disease who are older age and have co-morbidities, treatment may be postponed, or alternate plan pursued.</li> </ul>
Impact of COVID-19 on the management of side effects of cancer treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All modalities of cancer treatment may cause significant side effects some of which might require hospitalization.</li> <li>• Patients should continue to report any side effects from cancer treatment to their doctor or nurse.</li> <li>• When possible, usual face-to-face appointments can be replaced with telephone or virtual meeting (video) consultations. Health care provider should maintain routine communication to assess and assist with managing these side effects.</li> <li>• The doctor may take extra precautions during this time to minimize hospital visits related to the management of side effects.</li> </ul>
What is the impact of COVID-19 cancer care?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In cancer patients who develop symptoms of COVID-19, the medical priority will be to isolate and treat the COVID-19 infection rather than the cancer.</li> <li>• Cancer treatment will likely resume once there is sufficient recovery from COVID-19 and no evidence of ongoing viral infection.</li> </ul>
Impact of COVID-19 on end of life care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to affect end of life treatment plans.</li> <li>• Hospitals and hospices may restrict visitors during the pandemic; therefore, patients on palliative care treatment might be given the option to be cared for at home by family rather than in a healthcare setting, if possible.</li> <li>• It is important to note that even when cared for at home, visitors from outside will not be possible under the current social distancing rules.</li> <li>• When possible, patients on palliative care treatment can stay in touch with loved ones via telephone and virtual meeting (video) calls.</li> </ul>