# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS on COVID-19 and Cancer

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| **How does COVID-19 impact access to cancer screening.** | • 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  
• 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  
• Anyone with symptoms suggestive of cancer, should contact their health care provider to seek advice and should not delay receiving evaluation and care |
| **Impact of COVID-19 on diagnostic and staging procedures** | • 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.  
• In some patients, staging procedures may be limited to those that are the most crucial to guide treatment. |
| **Impact of COVID-19 on cancer treatment** | • 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.  
• 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. |
| **Impact of COVID-19 on the management of side effects of cancer treatment** | • All modalities of cancer treatment may cause significant side effects some of which might require hospitalization.  
• Patients should continue to report any side effects from cancer treatment to their doctor or nurse.  
• 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.  
• The doctor may take extra precautions during this time to minimize hospital visits related to the management of side effects. |
| **What is the impact of COVID-19 cancer care?** | • 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.  
• Cancer treatment will likely resume once there is sufficient recovery from COVID-19 and no evidence of ongoing viral infection. |
| **Impact of COVID-19 on end of life care** | • The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to affect end of life treatment plans.  
• 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.  
• 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.  
• When possible, patients on palliative care treatment can stay in touch with loved ones via telephone and virtual meeting (video) calls. |