

COVID-19 and Cancer Treatment

Information for Patients & Families

This information is **specific to Alberta cancer patients**. Your main source of information on COVID-19 and health is at [Alberta.ca](https://alberta.ca) and albertahealthservices.ca/COVID.

The global COVID-19 pandemic is changing daily. We will update this information as things change.

As a cancer patient, am I more likely to get COVID-19?

At this point, we cannot be sure if cancer patients are more likely to get sick with COVID-19. But, you may be at higher risk for more severe symptoms of COVID-19 if your immune system is weaker from the cancer and treatment. To help keep yourself safe, follow the COVID-19 [precautions](#).

Questions About Symptoms

Chemotherapy

I am on chemotherapy and I have a fever. What should I do?

If you have a temperature of:

- 38.3°C (100.9°F) or higher at any time **or**
- 38.0°C (100.4°F) to 38.2°C (100.8°F) for at least 1 hour

Follow the directions your cancer centre gave you.

- Call the contact number we gave you. If you can't get through or it's after hours, go to your nearest emergency department.
- Give the nurse your emergency letter and tell them that you are on chemotherapy

Immunotherapy

I am on immunotherapy and have developed a cough, shortness of breath or fever. What should I do?

If you have:

- a fever or 38.9°C (102°F) or higher that lasts longer than 24 hours
- a cough **or**
- difficulty breathing

Follow the directions your cancer centre gave you, and call the contact number they gave you. They will tell you what you need to do next.

Radiation Treatment

I am on radiation treatment and have a cough related to treatment. What should I do?

If you are having treatment to the chest or lungs, a cough can be a normal side effect from treatment. Answer the screening questions honestly and let them know you have a cough and are having radiation treatment to the lungs. You will be asked to put on a mask and if you have no other symptoms, will be directed to the radiation department for your scheduled treatment.

Screening for COVID-19 at the Cancer Centres

Please note: You may receive a screening phone call before your appointment at the cancer centre.

Arriving at a cancer centre

What can I expect when I come to the cancer centre?

- Use the hand sanitizer immediately upon entering the building.
- We will ask you and your support person screening questions. This will help us limit people's exposure to COVID-19 within our centres and keep patients and staff as safe as possible.
- There may be line-ups. Please come **5-10 minutes earlier** than you normally do. This will give you time for the screening questions and help you get to your appointment on time.
- Please respect the need to stay 2 meters or 6 feet away from others at screening desks, reception desks and in waiting areas

What will happen if I have symptoms when I arrive at the cancer centre?

- If you have symptoms, **call your cancer centre before** you come so we can assess you by phone first.
- If you do arrive to the cancer centre with symptoms that may be from COVID-19, we will ask you to wash your hands and put on a mask. A healthcare provider will assess you. They will wear personal protective equipment like gloves, gown and mask. After they finish assessing you, they will contact your doctor.

Visitors

What do I need to do if I am visiting a cancer centre?

Check visiting guidelines: [Information for people visiting patients](#)

Am I allowed to bring visitors to the cancer centre with me?

Yes, you may bring 1 support person to the cancer centre. Review the [information for people visiting patients](#) for guidelines.

Questions About Appointments

Clinic Visits (Follow-up and Treatment)

To lower the chances of COVID-19 for our patients and staff, your care team is reviewing your care before your appointment. We are working to set up telephone follow-up appointments to help limit the amount of people that need to be at the cancer centres.

I am worried about getting COVID-19. Do I have to come in for my follow up appointment?

Depending on the reason for your appointment, your healthcare team may offer you a "virtual" visit using the phone, or a video chat. We will only offer this as an option if it is safe to do so. Clinic staff may ask you what technology (phone or computer) you have access to and are comfortable using. Please let them know if you have any concerns.

Treatment Appointments (Radiation and Systemic)

Should I still go to my cancer treatment appointment?

Treatment appointments are still scheduled. Please plan to come.

If you do not feel well, please call the cancer centre first using the contact number you were given.

What happens if my treatment appointment needs to be cancelled?

If you have COVID-19 or other symptoms that keep you from going to your treatment appointment, your oncologist will talk to you about the next steps.

Other Frequently Asked Questions

Bloodwork

My lab that I normally go to for bloodwork is closed. Where do I go?

Labs are working hard to make sure they have enough staff and resources to meet the public's needs safely. If your local lab is closed, check for more information at [DynaLife Medical Labs](#) or [Alberta Precision Labs](#).

I'm immunocompromised. Is it safe for me to get my bloodwork/MRI/CT/PET?

Every Alberta Health Services site is doing what they can to keep staff and patients safe. Please see <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16997.aspx> for more information. If you still have concerns, talk to your cancer care team about the impact changing these appointments will have on your care.

Cancer Medications

If I need cancer medications for home, what do I do?

Call the cancer pharmacy like you normally do. We ask that you call for your refill medication **2 weeks in advance** so there is time to mail your prescription to you. You do not need to come and pick up your medication. If you have a telephone or virtual appointment, your medication will be couriered to you.

Isolation and Exposure

I live with someone who is self-isolating. Do I have to self-isolate as well?

Follow these [self-isolation](#) guidelines.

I think I've been exposed to COVID-19, but I can't get through to 811. What should I do?

AHS has added more staff to answer the increase in calls. We are trying to make sure that there is less of a wait time, so please be patient.

Can my cancer centre have me tested for COVID-19?

At this time, CancerControl Alberta is not testing people for COVID-19. If you need testing, please complete the [online self-assessment tool](#) and follow the directions for COVID-19.

Classes and Events

Are there still classes, support groups and events?

We are **postponing** all classes, support groups and events at our cancer centres until further notice. This is to help limit the amount of people at the centres. Online classes and supports are being added. Check [Information for Patient and Families](#) to find online learning.