

If you are showing any symptoms such as fever, cough or shortness of breath and you think you might have coronavirus or you've been in close contact with someone who has it:

- stay at home and avoid close contact with other people
- do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital
- dial the NHS 111 coronavirus service to find out what to do next

### **Should patients cease their medication as a precaution?**

Some rheumatology patients, particularly those on steroids and biologics, will be immunosuppressed and should therefore be considered 'high risk'. All patients should however continue to take their medication unless directed otherwise by their rheumatology team. If you are planning to start or switch to a new medication this may need to be reviewed. Please remember patients on long term glucocorticoids (steroids, prednisolone) should not stop these suddenly.

### **Should patients who become infected with the virus cease their medication?**

If patients develop symptoms of any infection, immunosuppressive therapy should be paused for the duration of the infection and until they feel well, in consultation with their rheumatology team. For those on glucocorticoids (steroids, prednisolone) where treatment should not be stopped abruptly, urgent advice should be sought from their treating team.

### **What precautions should patients be advised to take?**

Patients concerned about the risk of infection should be advised to take precautions as outlined on the coronavirus page on [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk). In addition, patients should ensure that their vaccinations, such as flu and pneumococcal, are up to date to reduce the risk of secondary infections.

### **Should patients who are immunosuppressed be offered alternative clinic appointments?**

Clinicians will be considering providing remote consultations by telephone to reduce the need for patients to attend face-to-face appointments. If implemented, this will be communicated to patients.

The most up-to-date advice and guidance on the risks can be found on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) website. We would encourage patients to refer to this information with any concerns.