



Frequently Asked Questions About Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)

Q1: What is coronavirus disease (COVID-19)?

Coronavirus describes a family of viruses that can affect humans and animals. This family of viruses is responsible for the common cold, as well as more severe diseases such as SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) and MERS (Middle East respiratory syndrome).

More specifically, the current coronavirus has been named “SARS-CoV-2.” The illness the virus causes is COVID-19, which stands for “coronavirus disease 2019.” COVID-19 is the name of the disease, not the virus.

This specific virus has not been seen by humans before, and therefore our immune system is not able to mount a response as quickly or effectively. This can result in more severe symptoms. This is especially dangerous for older adults, those who are immunosuppressed or people with diabetes, heart or lung issues.

The symptoms of COVID-19 typically include fever, cough and shortness of breath. Symptoms can range from mild to severe, and complications can be more serious in people with the risk factors described above.

Q2: Are melanoma patients at a higher risk for COVID-19?

There is still a lot to learn about how COVID-19 affects different populations. One thing that’s known is that it has a worse effect on older people, and those with underlying health issues.

Patients who are actively receiving chemotherapy, immunotherapy or radiation therapy may have a weaker immune system and may be more susceptible – but, we don’t know for sure. Patients recovering from surgery may also be at an increased risk.

For those concerned about their risk the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has [specific recommendations](#) for people who are at higher risk.

In general, limit exposure to others as much as you can and travel only if it is absolutely necessary.



Q3: Should people who have been affected by melanoma follow the general public health recommendations issued by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO)?

Yes. Stay aware of the latest information on the COVID-19 outbreak, available on the [WHO website](#) and through your national and local public health authority. Many countries around the world have seen cases of COVID-19 and several have seen outbreaks. Authorities in China and some other countries have succeeded in slowing or stopping their outbreaks. However, the situation is unpredictable so check regularly for the latest news.

You can reduce your chances of being infected or spreading COVID-19 by taking some precautions the [CDC](#) and [WHO](#) have put in place.

Q4: If a melanoma patient or caregiver starts experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, what should they do?

Per [CDC guidelines](#), if you think you have been exposed to COVID-19 and develop a fever and symptoms, such as cough or difficulty breathing, call your healthcare provider for medical advice.

This is especially the case if you develop these symptoms while you are actively on treatment for your melanoma, are immunosuppressed or have other serious medical conditions.

Many healthcare providers are now conducting “virtual” or tele appointments, if there is an option to meet virtually, it is highly recommended that you use that option before going to the hospital. They can counsel you on whether you should go to the emergency room or doctor’s office, where you could risk additional exposure. It is important to mention that the symptoms can get worse rapidly, and therefore this decision should be made with the advice of your doctor or care team.

Q5: Should patients skip checkup or treatment appointments at this time?

Speak with your healthcare team about upcoming appointments to determine whether they advise you to cancel or postpone them. For example, if you are healthy and in regular follow-up (no active cancer), it may be best to postpone your checkup visit with your doctor until after the situation improves.



For patients who have upcoming surgery, chemotherapy, immunotherapy or radiation therapy appointments, we recommend discussing with your healthcare team. The answer will depend on the individual and where they are in their treatment.

As of now, many hospital systems are postponing elective surgeries. However, in many cases this will not affect essential biopsies including skin and tumor biopsies. Please reach out to your provider if you have a biopsy scheduled for the most up-to-date information.

Q6: I am on or about to start a clinical trial, what should I do?

The FDA is aware that protocol modifications may be required, and that there may be unavoidable protocol deviations due to COVID-19. Although the impact of COVID-19 on trials will vary depending on many factors, FDA outlines considerations to assist sponsors in assuring the safety of trial participants, maintaining compliance with good clinical practice and minimizing risks to trial integrity. You can read more about the guidance document in the [press release](#). With that said, we encourage you to discuss your concerns with your healthcare provider.

Q7: What should I do if I see a new and/or concerning spot?

The [American Academy of Dermatology](#) (AAD) is recommending that any patients scheduled for non-essential or elective services be rescheduled or seen via telemedicine. However, essential, urgent, and high acuity cases should still be treated in the office, which may help alleviate an influx of patients into acute care facilities on the front lines of the pandemic. In addition, the definition of “essential” may be different from one medical center to the other, so be sure to check with your healthcare provider.

COVID-19 is shifting how care is provided nationwide and physicians across all specialties are adapting practice patterns to maintain care while protecting the health of patients and staff.

If you notice a spot in your eye or the mucosal linings in your body, we highly encourage you to contact your ophthalmologist or healthcare provider to schedule a “virtual” or tele appointment and discuss next steps.

It is highly recommended that a “virtual” or tele appointment is used as the new standard during these uncertain times.



Q8: How can melanoma patients stay connected while socially distancing themselves?

It's important for patients' (and their caregivers') mental and physical health to practice as much self-care as possible during this challenging time. That means trying to eat healthy, sleep well and get some exercise.

There are also ways to stay in close contact with loved ones, like FaceTime, Google Hangouts, Zoom and others, that can make you feel connected from a physical distance.