****

**IWK Health Centre PEDIATRIC CANCER AND BLOOD DISORDERS IMMUNOCOMPROMISED PATIENTS**

**COVID INFORMATION SHEET (26 March 2020)**

The WHO (World Health Organization) has declared COVID-19 a pandemic. At this time there is no evidence showing that children are more susceptible to COVID-19. Although complications are possible, healthy kids with confirmed infection typically have mild symptoms. There is not currently enough information on the effects of COVID-19 on children with chronic medical conditions to provide specific recommendations. Nonetheless, it is important to protect yourselves and others from the infection by taking precautionary measures.

We anticipate higher risk groups may develop more severe COVID-19 infection although this has not been confirmed to date. This includes pediatric oncology and immunocompromised pediatric patients.

Symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, cough, shortness of breath, and breathing difficulties.

There is no approved vaccine that protects against COVID-19. We recommend children maintain their standard immunizations (including Pneumococcal conjugate 13 and influenza). Like most viral respiratory illnesses, individuals with COVID-19 generally recover on their own. There is no specific treatment for the COVID-19 virus, although we can support symptoms if needed.

The following is recommended to everyone to prevent the spread of COVID-19:

* **Wash your hands.** Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds OR use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
* **Avoid touching your face especially eyes, nose, and mouth** with unwashed hands.
* **If you have symptoms as above, self-isolate at home. If you must go out, wear a face mask.** When you are sick, wearing a face mask (surgical or procedure mask) helps to stop the spread of germs from you to others. If your mask gets wet or dirty, change it and wash your hands right away. If a mask is not available, carry tissues with you any time you are around other people.
* **If you are not sick, wearing a face mask when you go out in public spaces does not protect you from COVID-19.**
* **Cover your coughs and sneezes.** If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or the bend of your elbow, not your hands. Wash your hands right away after you sneeze, cough or touch used tissues or masks.
* **Maintain safe food practices and avoid sharing household items with people who are sick.** This includes dishes, cups, towels, etc.
* **Avoid all non-essential travel**
* **Flush the toilet with the lid down.** COVID-19 virus may also be present in poop (stool or feces). Always wash your hands with soap and water after using the toilet.
* **Clean and disinfect common areas once a day.** Clean surfaces in your house with soap and water or regular household cleaners.
* **Avoid contact with people who are sick.**
* **Avoid large crowds and practice social distancing (do not shake hands, hug or kiss and try to stay 2 meters away from others if you have to go out).**
* **Get your flu shot.** By protecting yourself from influenza you can decrease the burden on the healthcare system and protect others as well.

**If your child is immunocompromised it is recommended to:**

* **Continue current care:** do not stop any medications without consultation with your medical team, even if you fear becoming immunocompromised and contracting COVID-19. Stopping therapy could potentially make your underlying disease worse.
* **Do not take drugs that are being tested against COVID19**, such as chloroquine. These are considered experimental for COVID 19 at this point and may have serious side effects and/or interact with your child’s usual medications.
* **Fill prescriptions:** Try to have at least a 4 week supply of medications. Be in contact with your care team well in advance if you require more medications.
* **Limit exposure:** While full self-isolation is not necessary, it is recommended to limit exposure to groups where infections may spread (this includes schools, daycare, etc.). This would be the case for all family members of immunocompromised patients wherever possible.
* **If your child is unwell, call the clinic or on call oncologist.** They will instruct you whether or not your child needs assessment and if so where the most appropriate place to go would be.
* **Please do not go to a COVID-19 assessment center unless directed by the oncologist**
* **Do not delay medical care** due to concern of contracting COVID-19 at hospital. There are many measures in place to prevent this from happening.
* **Proactively develop a plan** that allows for isolation of affected family members if your child or you become sick. Include plans for caregivers for any affected child, as well as a different caregiver for your other children.

**If your immunocompromised child is suspected to have a COVID-19 infection:**

* Please let your FCC know if you suspect your child might have been exposed to COVID-19. They should be on quarantine (self-isolation) for 14 days. Here is a link on how to do this:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/covid-19-how-to-isolate-at-home.html>

* **If your child is unwell, please call the clinic, or the on call oncologist after hours before going to the Emergency Department.**
* If your child has fever, cough or other COVID-19 or viral symptoms, **please call the clinic, or the on call oncologist after hours before coming to the hospital.**
* **Remember fever/neutropenia requires rapid assessment and treatment. Your child needs assessment even if it turns out not to be COVID-19.**
* **If you come to the Emergency Department, please show your Treat Promptly Card. If you have mislaid, let the triage nurse that your child is immunocompromised.**
* If your child is confirmed to have a COVID-19 infection, they will likely still have mild symptoms and may be able to be managed at home, but it would be essential to work with your medical team to ensure appropriate testing and management.
* Ensure you have a thermometer at home.
* Ensure you have some acetaminophen or ibuprofen at home (do not use ibuprofen unless instructed by your health care team to do so).
* Ensure you have cleaning supplies, hand soap, hand sanitizer, etc. at home.

The IWK website is being updated frequently given the evolving nature of this pandemic. Further information may be obtained from your FCC or found at: <http://www.iwk.nshealth.ca/>

**We realize this is a stressful time for you. Non-urgent clinic visits are cancelled effective March 18th. We will be rebooking these as soon as possible. Please call if you have questions or concerns.**

NOTE: To protect you and our patients, we are limiting out-patient visitors and in-patient visitors to one family members. Please respect this number.

Approved by:

Conrad Fernandez, Pediatric Hematology Oncology Division Head and Jeannette Comeau, Medical Director, Infection Prevention & Control; Pediatric Infectious Diseases Physician, IWK Health Centre.