



Dear Valued Patient,

As you all know, the coronavirus strain COVID-19 is now in our community. Because you are on a biologic immune modulating medication, there is some concern that you may be at greater risk of infection. There are currently no guidelines from the CDC or the health department regarding how to approach patients on immune modulators, and there are no good studies in the medical literature to use as a basis for recommendations. However, based on what we do know about these medications, and what we know about the virus, we have the following advice for you.

1. Please be certain that you have received all appropriate vaccinations, including seasonal influenza, pneumonia (if 65 or older), pertussis, and shingles (if 50 or older) vaccines. These will not prevent COVID-19, but may lessen the chance of a secondary infection and will prevent illnesses that could be confused with COVID-19.
2. Please employ frequent handwashing and in general avoid touching your face or mucous membranes (nose, eyes, mouth).
3. Avoid crowds as much as possible. Avoid cruise travel and non-essential air travel. During a COVID-19 outbreak in your community, stay home as much as possible to further reduce your risk of being exposed.
4. Avoid being around others who are ill, especially those who are coughing or sneezing. The routine wearing of masks by uninfected individuals is not encouraged. Only fit-tested N95 masks have been shown to prevent transmission of other coronaviruses (e.g., SARS), and the use of other masks may give patients a false sense of security and lessen other protective measures.
5. Keep ample stocks (e.g., one-month supply) of necessary medications on hand in case you are prevented from refilling prescriptions in a timely manner.
6. If you feel ill with flu-like symptoms (fever, cough, difficulty breathing), please do not take your next dose of immune modulating medication. Also please contact your primary care provider by phone to determine whether you need to be tested or evaluated. Once you feel well again, contact us for instructions on re-starting your medication. Be aware that if you do have to take a break from your medication, it may take some time to regain efficacy after re-starting it again.

Sincerely,

Anna Hare MD, Jill Moore MD, Phoebe Rich MD, Amy Simpson PA-C

Phoebe Rich Dermatology

Sources:

American College of Rheumatology: <https://www.rheumatology.org/announcements>

Oregon Health

Authority: <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/DISEASES/CONDITIONS/DISEASESAZ/Pages/emerging-respiratory-infections.aspx>

Center for Disease Control: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>