

**IBD Working Group**  
**British Society of Paediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition (BSPGHAN)**  
**Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) and COVID-19 in children with IBD**

**PARENT/CARER INFORMATION LEAFLET**

We have been giving particular thought to our patients with IBD during the coronavirus pandemic and the extra steps that can be taken to keep your child well. A potential risk, which might affect children with IBD comes from the fact your child's immune system (defence against illness) may not be as strong as it would be for people without IBD. We realise that you may already be concerned by everything that is happening and all the advice that is being given including the scenarios 'social distancing' and 'shielding'. We aim to further specify those terms.

The three main features of '**social distancing**' are:

1. Avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). These symptoms include high temperature and/or new and continuous cough.
2. Avoid non-essential use of public transport.
3. If outside your home, avoid contact with the public and maintain a safe distance to other people of at least 2 metres.

These three points currently apply to all people in the UK but should be even more stringently followed by children with IBD particularly if taking the following medicines:

- One immunomodulatory drug (e.g. azathioprine, methotrexate) or
- One biologic (e.g. adalimumab, infliximab, ustekinumab or vedolizumab) or
- A combination of an immunomodulatory drug with a biologic without signs of active IBD.

For children with IBD who are unwell with signs of active IBD and/or:

- require high doses of systemic steroids (e.g. prednisolone; threshold varies according to body weight and will be guided by your IBD Team) or
- are within 6 weeks of starting treatment with biologics (e.g. infliximab, adalimumab, ustekinumab or vedolizumab).

we advise to further enhance protection by '**shielding**'. This means to strictly avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus infection and for your child not to leave your home, therefore not going out for shopping, leisure or travel. We appreciate that the governments' guidance to minimise all non-essential contact with other members of their household/family in shielded patients might not be possible in young children. It is however advisable to keep the number of carers who look after 'shielded' children to a minimum and for those carers to stringently follow 'social distancing'.

We have received many enquiries regarding IBD medications. There is emerging evidence that children are safe to continue their medicines during the coronavirus pandemic and that stopping medicines put children at risk of disease relapse. We therefore strongly advise for your child to continue with their current medicines. Your IBD Team will be working closely with your general practitioner to ensure you get the medicines and care you need at this difficult time. Please ensure that you request prescriptions with plenty of time to spare as it might take longer than usual to provide prescriptions.

You will find that most face to face appointments will be cancelled and changed to telephone appointments, to minimise travel and social contact and to keep your child safe. If you are required to attend the hospital for investigations or treatment, please do so as planned whilst adhering to social distancing measures.

If your child has symptoms of coronavirus infection, or has had contact with someone who has coronavirus symptoms, please follow the advice as outlined on the website [www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19) and contact your IBD team before attending for any planned infusions, admissions or investigations.

Please contact your IBD team by telephone if your child is taking an immunomodulatory drug, a biologic medicine or steroid medication and they have a fever over 37.8 as they may need review by the clinical team.

We understand that many of you will be worried about the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Whilst the situation is changing on a day to day basis, we wanted to keep you updated and support you and your child during this difficult time. Further information about how to support your child's mental health and well-being is provided in the links listed below.

With best wishes,

*IBD Working Group, BSPGHAN*

*06<sup>nd</sup> of April 2020*

**Useful links:**

General government guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19>

Supporting children and young people's wellbeing:

<https://www.cicra.org/how-we-can-help/coronavirus/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing>

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/healthy-parenting>