



COVID-19 and cancer

Cancer care during COVID-19

A message for people affected by cancer



View [Cancer Australia's video on YouTube](#).

Cancer care

If you have been diagnosed with cancer, you may be concerned about whether you will get the treatment you need.

Some types of cancer and treatments such as chemotherapy can weaken the immune system and may increase risk of infection, including COVID-19. Adults and children with cancer are at higher risk of developing more serious complications from contagious illnesses such as COVID-19.

During this time all cancer treatment will be considered on a case-by-case basis taking into account the potential risk of exposure to COVID-19 and the individual circumstances of the cancer patient.

Your doctors will consider the risks and benefits for you and will involve you in these discussions.

Unless you hear otherwise, please continue with your current treatment and care plan as agreed with your treatment team.

Health advice

Further information and advice regarding your specific health care situation and the latest COVID-19 developments can be obtained through the following services.

- [WA COVID hotline](#) (phone 13 COVID (13 26843))
- [HealthyWA](#)
- [Statewide Cancer Nurse Coordination service](#)
- [National Coronavirus Helpline](#) (phone: 1800 020 08)
- [Cancer and COVID-19 – what it means for our mob](#)
- [Cancer Australia](#)
- [Cancer Council Australia – Cancer and Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) fact sheet](#)
- [Cancer Council WA](#)
- [HealthDirect helpline](#) (phone: 1800 022 222)
- [Palliative Care Information and Support Line](#) (phone 1800 573 299)

What to do if you are unwell

WA hospitals have put in place all necessary measures to ensure your safety. If you are unwell, avoidance of hospital due to fear of potential exposure to COVID-19 can be more harmful to you.

If you are concerned about your health during and following cancer treatment, please contact your cancer team by phone and follow the advice and precautions outlined to you.

If you are very unwell or the matter is urgent then you should call an ambulance by dialling 000 and organise immediate transfer to your nearest Emergency Department.

Take your neutropenic card or immunotherapy side effects card (if you have one) with you to the Emergency Department as this will assist the emergency team to contact your cancer team quickly.

How health care professionals care is guided

Your cancer health care professionals are being guided by state, national and international recommendations for patient management during COVID-19. Advice is continually being updated as the COVID-19 situation evolves. [Clinical guidelines and alerts](#) have been developed to inform the management of specific situations in WA.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic the WA health system is changing some of the ways it delivers care. [Fact sheets](#) have been developed to explain these changes further.

What to do if you think you've been exposed to COVID-19

If you have cancer and you:

- are aware you have been in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19

OR

- are experiencing fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath

you should contact the Department of Health WA's COVID-19 hotline on 13 COVID (13 26843).

If you require urgent medical attention you should call an ambulance by dialing 000 and advise of your situation. If you are driving to the Emergency Department you must call ahead before leaving home so that appropriate infection control measures can be prepared prior to your arrival.

Follow the advice given and contact your treatment team to let them know what you have been advised.

Practical tips to limit your risk of exposure to COVID-19 can be found here:

- [Cancer Council Australia](#)
- [Cancer Council WA](#)

Support during COVID-19

Adults

The WA Psycho-Oncology Service (WAPOS) provides clinical psychology care to adult Western Australians who are affected by cancer. The service is located at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital and Fiona Stanley Hospital. Currently all appointments are being provided by phone.

If you require support, please discuss this with your treating team who can refer you to this service if appropriate.

Further information can be found at the [WAPOS](#) website.

Adolescents and young adults

The WA Youth Cancer Service (WA YCS) is for adolescents and young adults aged between 15 and 25 years who have been diagnosed with cancer. It provides free medical, nursing and psychosocial treatment and care. Tele-health facilities are available.

If you require support, please contact the WA YCS to find out what is available to you.

Further information can be found at the [WA YCS](#) website.

Children

There are many groups across Australia that can offer information and support for children with cancer and their families. Cancer Australia provides information on leading consumer support and advocacy groups.

Further information can be found at the [Cancer Australia](#) website.

Palliative Care for cancer during COVID-19

The COVID-19 infection can be more severe for people with immunocompromised conditions, such as cancer and some people may have new or increased needs for symptom management and/or palliative care.

Information and resources specifically relevant to palliative care in Western Australia during COVID-19 can be accessed at the [Palliative Care WA](#) website.

Please discuss increased needs for community or home services with your treatment team.

Cancer Screening during COVID-19

BreastScreen WA

From Wednesday 29 April 2020, breast cancer screening will recommence gradually.

Bookings for appointments in the metropolitan area can be made by calling 13 20 50 from the 24 April 2020.

Further information can be found at the [BreastScreen WA](#) website.

WA Cervical Cancer Prevention (WACCP) Program

If you have received a reminder about cervical screening and you have any questions, please call your doctor or healthcare provider to talk about your circumstances.

Further information can be found at the [WACCP](#) webpage.

National Bowel Cancer Screening Program (NBCSP)

The National Bowel Cancer Screening Program continues to operate as usual. Australian's aged 50-74 years will continue to receive a free bowel screening test kit in the mail.

Further information can be found at the [NBCSP](#) webpage.

Employment, cancer and COVID-19

People who are immunocompromised are deemed to be in a higher risk category for acquiring COVID-19 infection. In keeping with current guidelines, it is recommended that those deemed to be immunocompromised adhere to physical and social distancing measures as outlined by the Australian Government, WA Health Department and supported by the Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy advice for patients with immunodeficiencies.

If your employer requires a letter to confirm your eligibility for self-isolation the following [Confirmation of immunocompromised status template](#) can be forwarded to your treatment team for completion. Use of this template is intended to facilitate a smooth process and is not compulsory.

Travelling for medical treatment and isolation measures

If you are required to travel for medical treatment further information regarding travel restrictions, exemptions, isolation requirements and assistance can be found in the [Travelling for medical treatment fact sheet](#).

This document has been developed using the best available evidence and resources and is believed to be accurate at the time of publication. Information in this document is subject to change and it is essential that users of this document ensure they are accessing the most up to date online publication.

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This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with disability.

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