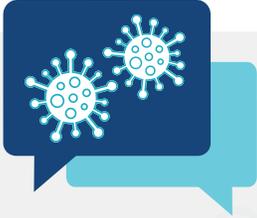




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## Pediatric Oncology Nursing during COVID-19



### How Does COVID-19 Affect Children with Cancer? <sup>1, 5, 8</sup>

Children, generally, do not seem to be as vulnerable to COVID-19 as adults. However, children with cancer are thought to be vulnerable due to their immunocompromised state. Importantly, **it is not yet known how frequently or severely children with cancer will be affected by COVID-19.**

### How Can I Protect My Patients? <sup>1, 3</sup>



The virus that causes COVID-19 is spread through the droplets of infected people, whether or not they are symptomatic.

The **best protection is through interventions that decrease the risk of transmission:**

- Frequent hand hygiene.
- Proper use of personal protective equipment.
- Physical distancing measures.

There are **no medications known to prevent COVID-19.**

Other ways to protect your patients:

- Guidance on hand hygiene, infection prevention, and physical distancing at home.
- Limit or decrease length of clinic appointments.
- Screen patients and families by phone and before entry to hospital.
- Limit caregivers to one per patient.
- Siblings and other family members should not visit at this time. Special arrangements may be needed for children nearing the end-of-life, or newly diagnosed or relapsed patients.
- **Strict isolation** for any patients with known or suspected COVID-19 infection.



### What Are the Recommendations for Staffing? <sup>2, 4, 7</sup>

- Nurses caring for neutropenic patients **SHOULD NOT** care for patients with suspected/confirmed COVID-19.
- If nurses are exposed to COVID-19, they should not care for neutropenic patients for 14 days.
- Nurses who have **tested positive for COVID-19 should not return to work for 14 days and should be cleared with two negative swabs** (per CDC recommendations).
- Refreshers or **training for any nurses who are asked to rotate or re-deploy** to another area to help manage patient surges.



### What Are the Recommendations for Chemotherapy Administration? <sup>6, 9</sup>

- Use **PPE that is adequate for both chemotherapy administration and protection from COVID-19.**
- Strategies to optimize PPE during chemotherapy handling may be needed in order to conserve PPE
- Examples of **interim guidelines** (from the Oncology Nursing Society) include:
  - Using a mask with face and eye protection only if splashing is likely or for cleaning spills.
  - Reusing a single gown for a single patient.
  - Having one nurse perform all disconnections/take-down of chemotherapy.
  - Using gloves only for lower hazardous-risk drugs.<sup>9</sup>

## Pediatric Oncology Nursing during COVID-19

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### Where Can I Get More Information?

Information will be continually updated as it becomes available at the Global COVID-19 Observatory and Resource Center for Childhood Cancer (<http://covid19childhoodcancer.org>)

Information for patients and families can be found at [www.together.stjude.org](http://www.together.stjude.org)

### References

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<sup>2</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Criteria for Return to Work for Healthcare Professionals with Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19 (Interim Guidance). (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/hcp-return-work.html>

<sup>3</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Patients with Suspected or Confirmed Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Healthcare Settings. (2020, April 12). Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-recommendations.html>

<sup>4</sup>Huang, L., Lin, G., Tang, L. et al. Special attention to nurses' protection during the COVID-19 epidemic. *Crit Care* 24, 120 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13054-020-2841-7>

<sup>5</sup>Kotecha. R. Challenges posed by COVID-19 to children with cancer. *Lancet Oncol*, 2020 [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1470-2045\(20\)30205-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1470-2045(20)30205-9)

<sup>6</sup>ONS Interim Guidelines during the COVID-19 Pandemic. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.ons.org/covid-19-interim-guidelines>

<sup>7</sup>ONS Recommendations for Oncology Staff Assignments During the COVID-19 Pandemic. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.ons.org/oncology-staff-assignments-covid-19>

<sup>8</sup>Rasmussen SA & Thompson LA. Coronavirus Disease 2019 and Children: What Pediatric Health Care Clinicians Need to Know. *JAMA Pediatr*, 2020 <http://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2020.1224>

<sup>9</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Table 2, NIOSH List of Antineoplastic and Other Hazardous Drugs in Healthcare Settings: Proposed Additions to the NIOSH Hazardous Drug List 2018 (Under Review). Retrieved from <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2018/02/14/2018-02957/niosh-list-of-antineoplastic-and-other-hazardous-drugs-in-healthcare-settings-proposed-additions-to>

