

COVID-19 (Coronavirus) infection: Advice to patients with rheumatic diseases

Guidance for patients during the COVID-19 outbreak from the American College of Rheumatology (ACR) and the European League Against Rheumatism (EULAR):

The rheumatic diseases as well as the drugs used for treatment affect the immune system. This may increase the risk of infection with the virus that causes the COVID-19 infection and worsen the disease course, but it looks as though primary risk factors such as age and co-morbidities are the main causes of increased risk. The following are recommendations for patients with rheumatic diseases during this pandemic:

- Follow all general measures to prevent the illness.
- Vaccination against various infections such as influenza and pneumonia are recommended.
- You should not stop or reduce your medication, unless your treating doctor tells you otherwise for a specific reason.
- If you're well, consider a telephonic or other remote consultation. Blood testing may be less frequent.
- If you are positive for COVID-19, please discuss this with your rheumatologist so that medication can be adjusted if needed.
- Please contact your rheumatologist with any queries or look at the resources below.

Important links:

General links:

- European Patients' Forum (EPF) - COVID-19 resources – <https://www.eu-patient.eu/COVID-19/>
- World Health Organization (WHO) -Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) Pandemic
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) - How to protect yourself? What to do if you are sick?
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

Rheumatology specific links:

- South African Rheumatism & Arthritis Association – <https://saraa.co.za/covid-19/>
- EULAR Guidance for patients COVID-19 outbreak – https://www.eular.org/eular_guidance_for_patients_covid19_outbreak.cfm
- Department of Rheumatology, UCT patient information sheet – <https://saraa.co.za/covid-19/>
- Arthritis and COVID-19 - your questions answered
<https://www.versusarthritis.org/covid-19-updates/arthritis-and-covid-19-your-questions-answered/>