

# COVID-2019 (“Coronavirus”)

Information and Recommendations

Updated: March 20, 2020

**URGENT:** Those diagnosed with Systemic Sclerosis, especially those who are on immunosuppression treatments, or have lung disease, need to **self-isolate at home for the next 15 days.**

**SOCIAL DISTANCING IS NECESSARY TO SLOW THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 AND TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY. CDC guidelines urge Americans to practice social distancing for 15 days to slow the spread of COVID-19.**

Read more [here](#) from the CDC.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is urging all Americans to practice “social distancing” for the next 15 days to slow the spread of COVID-19 and to protect yourself and your family.

- Avoid gatherings of 10 people or more
- As much as possible, maintain 6 feet of space between you and other people when you are in public
- Visit [www.coronaviruses.gov](http://www.coronaviruses.gov) for more information and updates on how to protect yourself
- Read this document thoroughly for more information

## Where can I get the latest information about the Coronavirus (COVID-19)?

We encourage everyone to check the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for the most up-to-date information and recommendations about the coronavirus, how it spreads, and how you can protect yourself and your family. Visit [www.coronavirus.gov](http://www.coronavirus.gov) for more information.

## As a Person Diagnosed with Scleroderma, Should I Be Worried?

Having scleroderma, especially if your lungs have been involved, may increase your risk for developing a more severe form of the COVID-19 illness. Taking certain immunosuppressive medications (medicines like CellCept, Rituxan, Actemra and others) may also increase the severity of COVID-19 if you do end up catching it. Methotrexate is believed to increase risk only slightly, and hydroxychloroquine (Plaquenil) is not believed to increase the risk at all.

- There is currently no evidence to indicate that you should stop your scleroderma medication unless you develop a fever or other symptoms that make you think you may be infected.
- You should speak with your rheumatologist before discontinuing your medication.

## What Should I Do if I Think I May be Infected?

The key symptoms of COVID-19 are fever accompanied by a cough, as well as shortness of breath.

If you have these symptoms, or if your baseline cough, shortness of breath or diarrhea are getting worse, you should contact your primary care doctor or an Immediate or Urgent Care facility **by telephone** in order to arrange for an evaluation. **You should not go in for an evaluation without communicating with the office first.**

**If you are having symptoms, you should not come in for a routinely scheduled appointment with your rheumatologist and you should not come in for any IV medication infusion appointments,** as there may be other patients in the office who might be at risk of being infected. Please discuss with your rheumatologist whether you need to come in right now for your routine evaluations or whether they can be done by phone/video or in the future.

Thank you to the Scleroderma Foundation ([www.scleroderma.org](http://www.scleroderma.org)) for sharing the following information with the Scleroderma Research Foundation and the scleroderma community. This information is provided courtesy of the Leadership Committee of the Scleroderma Foundation Medical & Scientific Advisory Board:

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