

Coronavirus: COVID-19

Information for transplant professionals

3rd Edition, 1st April 2020

This document provides information about COVID-19 for transplant professionals. The current advice is changing daily and professionals are advised to refer to NHS and Government information and resources produced by professional societies for the most up to date advice.

1. **NHSBT** Living and deceased donation guidance
<https://www.odt.nhs.uk/deceased-donation/covid-19-advice-for-clinicians/>
2. **NHSBT/BTS** Guidance on recipient and living donor consent in the context of COVID-19
[NHSBT-BTS-consent-guidance-COVID-19-26.3.20.pdf](https://www.odt.nhs.uk/deceased-donation/covid-19-advice-for-clinicians/NHSBT-BTS-consent-guidance-COVID-19-26.3.20.pdf)
3. **RA/BTS** Guidance on the management of transplant recipient with COVID-19
[Clinical guidance on the management of transplant recipients](https://www.odt.nhs.uk/deceased-donation/covid-19-advice-for-clinicians/Clinical-guidance-on-the-management-of-transplant-recipients)
4. **Government** latest information on COVID-19
<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
5. **Government** advice for health professionals
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>
6. **BTS/CET-Transplant Library** (open access): Emerging evidence on Covid 19 in solid organ donation and transplantation at <https://bts.org.uk/information-resources/covid-19-information/>

RECIPIENTS OF SOLID ORGAN TRANSPLANTS

There is insufficient data on patients with COVID-19 to draw a firm conclusion on the effects of immunosuppression but solid organ transplant recipients are likely to be at greater risk.

Transplant patients are advised to [follow national advice](#)

As of March 22nd, the government published advice on [shielding for extremely vulnerable](#) patients which recommends transplant patients to stay at home and avoid any face to face contact for at least 12 weeks from the date of the advice.

If patients suspect that they may have COVID-19, they should contact NHS 111.

<https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19>

- Patients who have symptoms or contact with COVID-19 patients are advised not to attend their GP, Emergency Department or transplant unit, as this increases the risk of spreading the virus further and putting other patients and staff at risk
- If a patient is diagnosed with COVID-19, it is recommended that the patient inform their transplant unit and they be monitored remotely during self-isolation. Any deterioration in condition should be referred back through NHS 111 for further evaluation
- Patients must be reminded not to stop their immunosuppression in the event of infection, unless recommended to do so by a transplant professional
- Patients returning from overseas must be managed in line with national advice, as above.

Patients diagnosed with or suspected of having COVID-19

- Should be managed in accordance with [above guidance](#)
- Must be reported to NHS BT [here](#)

REDUCING THE RISK TO PATIENTS

National guidance on [general hygiene](#) and use of [personal protection equipment \(PPE\)](#) must be followed at all times

The advice includes, regular handwashing, alcohol gel use, avoidance of touching your face and maintaining a personal distance at all times.

- Patients must avoid contact with other people who are unwell
- Trusts are advised to avoid placing patients with respiratory symptoms in similar clinical areas to transplant recipients
- Transplant recipients should be encouraged to follow the [national guidance on shielding](#)
- Levels of immunosuppression should be reviewed but generalised immunosuppression reduction that may jeopardise organ function is not recommended
- Transplant units are advised to consider ways to limit hospital attendances for patients, such as:
 - rescheduling non urgent out-patient appointments
 - virtual or telemedicine appointments
 - home delivery of immunosuppression

ORGAN DONORS

Each deceased organ donor should be assessed in line with advice from NHS BT <https://www.odt.nhs.uk/deceased-donation/covid-19-advice-for-clinicians/>

Potential living donors should be assessed in line with GOV.UK and NHS BT policy to evaluate their risk of having COVID-19 – [refer to guidance on consent](#). Donors who are at risk of COVID-19 or are self-isolating are not to be considered for organ donation.

ACUTE TRANSPLANTATION

There is no evidence-based guidance on the risk of acute transplantation during a viral outbreak.

- Transplant units need to be aware that public health measures and availability of critical care beds may pose restrictions on their ability to undertake organ transplants
- Recipients with active COVID-19 or recovering from an acute COVID-19 infection should not undergo transplantation
- The decision to undertake transplantation during the outbreak will need to be made on a case by case basis where the risk of infection at a time of peak immunosuppression must be balanced against the risk of organ failure or treatment of organ failure
- Patients for transplantation must be counselled about the risks and benefits of each option – [guidance on consent](#)
- In the event of more widespread infection or reduced availability of resources for the care of recipients and/or living donors, a temporary suspension of acute transplant activities may be necessary.

GUIDANCE TO STAFF

Transplant units are recommended to follow national guidance regarding health professionals <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>

- Consideration should be given to planning for significant numbers of staff self-isolating.
- Each unit is advised to risk assess the local situation so that there is a plan in place to manage unexpected cases of Covid-19 should they present to the transplant unit
Particular consideration is required for rapid isolation and containment of the patient away from other patients and staff.
- All transplant units must be aware of national and local guidance for managing patients with COVID-19.

Links to useful sources of information for recipients of solid organ transplants:

[Renal association](#)

[Kidney Care UK](#)

[Pregnancy and renal disease](#)

[British Liver Trust](#)

[British Association for the Study of the Liver](#)

[International Society for Heart and Lung Transplantation](#)

[BTS/Transplant Library emerging evidence on COVID 19](#)

<https://bts.org.uk/information-resources/covid-19-information/>

Information correct as of **1st April 2020**. Please refer to the BTS website at www.bts.org.uk to ensure that you are using the latest update of this information