

NMOSD and the COVID-19 Disease Pandemic

Dear Friends,

March 30, 2020

We hope everyone is well and coping with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. With information changing on a daily basis, we are reaching out to the NMOSD community to aid in your navigation of the many questions at hand. While the Foundation does not provide clinical care policies or recommendations, we hope these 10 frequently asked questions assist all NMOSD patients to make informed decisions with their doctors.

1. **What is the difference between SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19 ?** SARS-CoV-2 is the name of the specific strain of coronavirus causing the current pandemic. COVID-19 is the name of the disease caused by this virus. The acronym COVID-19 is derived from: **CO** = corona + **VI** = virus + **D** = disease + **19** = emerged in 2019.
2. **Does NMOSD increase my risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection ?** There is no evidence at the present time to suggest that having NMOSD increases the risk of being infected by the virus itself. Avoiding exposure is key (see below).
3. **Would COVID-19 increase my risk of having an NMOSD relapse ?** While there is no established proof that infection causes relapses in NMOSD, some data suggest inflammatory events such as infection might raise the risk of having a relapse. To minimize this risk, observe best practices to avoid infection (see below).
4. **Would COVID-19 increase my risks of a secondary infection ?** In some viral infections such as influenza, up to 65% of individuals experience secondary infections caused by bacteria or fungi. These risks may be greater in patients on immune suppressing therapy. A lower risk of secondary infection in COVID-19 is not yet proven.
5. **Should I continue NMOSD therapy during the COVID-19 pandemic ?** The [U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention](#) (CDC) and [American College of Rheumatology](#) (ACR) have offered guidance on this point. These organizations encourage patients to decide with their doctors regarding the best treatment plan, weighing all factors. Generally, the CDC and ACR suggest there is no evidence for patients to change their normal treatment regimen & schedule. Stopping treatment may increase risks of relapse and necessitate clinical care in settings that may increase risks of exposures to the SARS-CoV-2 virus or other germs. Please note that the CDC or ACR guidance may be subject to change. Consult your NMOSD neurologist with any special concerns.
6. **What should I do if I have symptoms of an infection ?** If you have a persistent fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, swollen lymph nodes, eye redness or any other symptoms of respiratory or other infection, please contact your NMOSD neurologist right away. You may be tested for other respiratory infections (e.g. influenza), which can be treatable in early stages. In any infection, early detection and treatment affords best outcomes.
7. **What should I do if I experience symptoms of a relapse ?** If you experience new onset signs or symptoms of an NMOSD relapse (e.g. vision change, numbness or weakness in limbs, bowel or bladder dysfunction, etc.) please contact your NMOSD neurologist right away. Early, accurate diagnosis of true relapses allows best care.
8. **What can I do to help stay healthy & cope with COVID-19 ?**
 - ☑ **Safe Lifestyle:** Practice hygiene, social distancing and [CDC measures to minimize risk of infection](#).
 - ☑ **Healthy Diet:** Eat a nutritious diet, wash fruits and vegetables and avoid any raw meats or eggs.
 - ☑ **Sleep Restful:** Restorative sleep occurs late during the sleep cycle, which takes 6 or more hours.
 - ☑ **Stop Smoking:** Respiratory infections target lung disease. Stop smoking for your health & others.
 - ☑ **Be Resilient:** Change has become part of everyday life in COVID-19. Adaptation is a necessity.
 - ☑ **Stay Positive:** The COVID-19 pandemic will pass in time. Until then, optimism & patience abide.
9. **Can I learn more about NMOSD & enhancing quality of life ?** The [GJCF website](#) offers many resources for patients, caregivers, families and healthcare providers to consider in choosing how to improve quality of life.
10. **Does GJCF have any healthcare recommendations ?** The Foundation does not offer clinical or healthcare recommendations. We hope this FAQ sheet helps you & your doctor decide best healthcare practices for you.