



Making decisions about prostate cancer treatment during the [COVID-19](#) pandemic

The correct name for the virus is SARS-coronavirus-2 and the disease it causes is Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). SARS means Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome. Throughout the document this new disease will be referred to as [COVID-19](#).

The aim of this document is to provide general information and is not intended to replace medical advice. Prostate Scotland **cannot give individual advice or recommend which treatments might be suitable for an individual or recommend individual medical care or health professionals** – patients should always check with their urologist, oncologist, CNS or GP regarding treatments. As the following is general information, guidance and procedures for each health board may be slightly different. If you have been given specific advice from your urologist, oncologist, CNS or GP then you should always follow their advice.

We have compiled this information on [COVID-19](#) and [prostate cancer](#) to the best of our knowledge and understanding at the present time. As the situation is constantly changing, almost on a daily basis, and as more knowledge and information become available, this information and guidance may change. We will try to keep you as up to date as possible.

Support for clinicians when making decisions about cancer treatment for their patients

The British Association of Urologists (BAUS) have compiled and issued to urologists and oncologists a comprehensive series of guidelines to assist them in making decisions when treating men with [prostate cancer](#) during the [COVID-19](#) pandemic.

The NHS action plan, issued on 3 March 2020, makes clear that 'at all phases of a future pandemic, the NHS/HSCNI and local authorities have plans in place to ensure people receive the essential care and support services they need – and sometimes this might mean that other services are reduced temporarily'.

It also states that as [COVID-19](#) moves into different phases 'the chief focus will be to provide essential services, helping those most at risk access the right treatment'.

Cancer patients will want to discuss with their clinicians whether the risks of beginning or continuing their cancer treatment could outweigh the benefits, given that many patients receiving systemic therapies in particular are more at risk of becoming seriously unwell if they contract the coronavirus infection.

*In the event of disruption to cancer services, clinicians may also need to **prioritise** treatment for those most in need. It is important that all decisions taken are done so with multidisciplinary team (MDT) input and clearly communicated with patients.*

Statement taken from Specialty guides for patient management during the coronavirus pandemic

Who to contact

Potentially your best point of contact for information in your particular circumstances will be your Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS). As you will understand, NHS staff are under a great deal of pressure at the moment and you may not get through to speak to the CNS straight away. You may be asked to leave your name and telephone number so a member of staff can call you back or they may advise on an email address that you can reach the person on.

If you attend your [GP practice](#) for follow-up and treatments for your [prostate cancer](#), then the GP or Practice Nurse may be the best person to contact. Again, you may be asked to leave your name and telephone number so a member of staff can call you back.

If your urologist, oncologist, CNS, GP or someone from the NHS is trying to get in touch with you, this may show on your phone as 'number withheld'. It may be best to answer 'number withheld' calls in this current situation, especially if you have left your name and number for a call back. They will let you know straight away who is calling.

You may receive a text from NHSNoReply. These are usually texts to give you information and don't allow you to get back in touch.

Another very helpful source of information is this leaflet produced by the Scottish Government: <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2020/03/coronavirus-covid-19-tailored-advice-for-those-who-live-with-specific-medical-conditions/documents/cancer/cancer/govscot%3Adocument/Cancer%2BPatient%2BInfo%2Bguidance%2B-%2B090420.pdf>

Shielding – what is it, why is it essential and the recent change to this guidance

Please note. You can see the latest Scottish Government guidance on '[shielding](#)'. You can also download the 2 page PDF route map on shielding.

On the 23rd July 2020, the Scottish Government announced that [shielding](#) is to be paused from **1.8.20**. You should receive a letter or SMS text message confirming the latest changes announced and that shielding is to be paused.

Some additional changes have now been announced to the original guidance on [shielding](#)

[As from 24.7.20](#) a number of changes were announced to the guidance on [shielding](#).

This includes being able to meet with up to **8** people from **2** other households each day **indoors**, being able to meet **outdoors** with up to **15** people from **4** other households, travel in a car with someone you don't live with, use public transport, go to pubs and restaurants staying in the outdoor areas, go to shops and indoor markets, go to the barbers or hairdresser and visit indoor attractions and if you live

alone you can form an extended household with one other household. You should wear a face covering if you can't physically distance and face coverings are compulsory on public transport and in shops. Continue to wash your hands with soap and water regularly especially when you get home if you've been out and about.

You can see more details in our 'Info Guidance' page on shielding [here](#).

You can also watch a video about shielding [here](#).

Further guidance about going out and about has been produced by the government:

1. A guide to help you understand what activities are safer than others can be found [here](#)
2. A tool to help you protect yourself during daily activities can be found [here](#)

A [workplace risk assessment tool](#) to help people consider their individual risk when returning to work is also available.

If you have not already registered with the SMS text service, then it may be worth considering doing so. A COVID-19 forecasting service for shielding is being developed and people who have been [shielding](#) will be informed through the SMS text service about the risk of being exposed to COVID-19 in their local area.

In the future, the Government is looking at other ways that shielding might change. As the situation changes and as more knowledge and information become available, guidance on shielding will change. We will try to keep you as up to date as possible with these changes.

For further information about shielding please see <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-shielding>

You will also find excellent information about these letters (as well as other extremely useful information) on the MacMillan website.

<https://www.macmillan.org.uk/coronavirus/cancer-and-coronavirus>

Your prostate cancer treatment plan

Your cancer treatment plan is individual to you.

Certain treatments for cancer can affect how well the immune system works. In particular, this may be the case for those men having [chemotherapy treatments](#) for their [prostate cancer](#). Their immune system may be affected and not work so well during their treatment and for a number of weeks or months afterwards. Those having treatment(s) over a number of months may be at a greater risk of developing more severe complications if they contract [COVID-19](#) (or indeed colds, 'flu or tummy bugs) during their treatment.

In all cases, it is important to think about the risks and benefits. Since some cancer treatments make it more difficult to fight infection so there is a potential increased risk of infection with [COVID-19](#) that such treatments might carry.

However, some men with [prostate cancer](#), due to age ie those over 70 and those with additional conditions such as diabetes, heart disease maybe more at risk of severe symptoms if they catch [COVID-19](#).

Your urologist, oncologist, CNS or GP may want to review your treatment plan with you to ensure it still best suits your needs and discuss any changes that may be appropriate. This will only ever be done to reduce overall risk and harm.

What are the implications at the moment?

Whether there may be implications for a man diagnosed with [prostate cancer](#) and his risk from [COVID-19](#) will depend on a number of factors including age, treatment(s), overall health and whether he has additional health conditions.

At the present time, The NHS Scotland and the Scottish Government has stated the NHS will continue to provide vital cancer treatments, and emergency and urgent care for all patients.

If it becomes necessary it will **prioritise** some patients for treatment based on need.

Considerations and decisions about cancer treatments for the individual man will still be assessed by the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT). Guidance on treatments and prioritising treatments has been issued and is available to the health boards.

It is very important to follow the measures already set out by the Scottish Government and NHS Scotland.

Who should I contact if I become unwell or develop side effects while on treatment for cancer?

If you have chest pain, significant bleeding or you need immediate medical attention call 999.

If you have a temperature or shivering or 'flu-like symptoms while you are on treatment for cancer, or for any side-effects of drug treatment, call your local cancer treatment helpline, or the national Cancer Treatment Helpline on 0800 917 7711. They will ask a series of questions and will give advice or arrange for you to have a medical review at your nearest hospital.

Thank you to our NHS

We would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank **all** NHS staff throughout Scotland who are doing a wonderful job in extremely challenging, difficult and unprecedented circumstances who have been working tirelessly to support all patients.

Although the weekly Thursday night 'Clap for our Carers' has come to an end, join the nation on Thursday 25th March 2021 at 8pm to celebrate our carers in the

[‘Clap for our Carers Day’](#) – a date to put in your diary now.

For more information and support

Organisation	Website/email
Prostate Scotland	www.prostatescotland.org.uk
For information on support groups please see	www.prostatescotland.org.uk/help-and-support-for-you/support-groups
NHS Inform	www.nhsinform.scot/
24-hour national cancer treatment helpline	0800 917 7711
Scottish government	www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/ https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2020/03/coronavirus-covid-19-tailored-advice-for-those-who-live-with-specific-medical-conditions/documents/cancer/cancer/govscot%3Adocument/Cancer%2BPatient%2BInfo%2Bguidance%2B-%2B090420.pdf
NHS 24	www.nhs24.com or telephone number is 111
British Association of Urological surgeons (BAUS)	www.baus.org.uk/patients/covid19_patient_information.aspx
Cancer Support Scotland	www.cancersupportscotland.org/
Macmillan cancer support Support nurses	www.macmillan.org.uk
Cancer research UK Cancer information nurses	www.cancerresearchuk.org
The Beatson Cancer Treatment Helpline	For Beatson patients only 0141 301 7990

Maggie's Centres	www.maggies.org enquiries@maggies.org
Prostate Cancer UK	www.prostatecanceruk.org www.prostatecancer.org/coronavirus https://prostatecanceruk.org/get-support/our-specialist-nurses
For mental health help and information	
Mind	www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/
Mental Health UK	https://mentalhealth-uk.org/help-and-information/covid-19-and-your-mental-health/
Breathing Space	Phone 0800 83 85 87 (6pm to 2am, weekdays and 24 hours at the weekend)
SAMH	https://www.samh.org.uk/ SAMH (Scotland's mental health)
Samaritans Scotland	https://www.samaritans.org/scotland/samaritans-in-scotland/
For general information and help with money worries CAB Citizens Advice Bureau	www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/

About this information

The information contained in this leaflet has been developed by Prostate Scotland and reviewed by members of our advisory group, [PAGES](#).

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