

# INFORMATION NOTE FOR PATIENTS WITH RED BLOOD CELL DISEASE REGARDING COVID-19

## GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

**Respect the confinement, limit your outings to the essentials.**

◆ Stay at home as much as possible. Only essential outings are allowed : food shop, doctor, pharmacy, petrol station, bank office, post office and to help anyone who is in need.

◆ Avoid public transport as much as possible.

◆ Keep enough distance at all times (1.5 meter at least).

◆ Walking, cycling and jogging are allowed but only in your neighbourhood and alone or with housemates.

◆ Telecommuting is obligatory if possible.

◆ If in the presence of a person with symptoms, avoid being in the same room.

◆ Practice all the usual barrier gestures:

-Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently.

-Do not greet each other by shaking hands, kissing or hugging.

-Cough or sneeze into your elbow.

- Use a single-use tissue and then throw it away.

- If you're sick, stay at home.

**Caution : if you have been prescribed a treatment for another pathology, do not interrupt the treatment in progress; refer to the treating doctor.**

The situation regarding the COVID-19 coronavirus leads us to provide you the following recommendations. These elements are updated as of March 31, 2020, but may be subject to change. We recommend that you regularly consult the BHS or BSPHO websites, or the European website [www.eurobloodnet.eu](http://www.eurobloodnet.eu). For general information, see the government website: <https://www.info-coronavirus.be>. The European site is updated regularly, but one must realize that it includes recommendations from other governments too, which may be different from the Belgian recommendations.

Currently, we have no specific data on the potential impact of the virus on rare red cell disease patients. However, it is likely that the risk is increased in certain medical conditions or situations:

- **G6PD deficiency**: As with any infection leading to fever or inflammation, there is a risk of a flare-up of hemolytic anemia (destroying red blood cells).

- **Sickle cell disease**: Infection could trigger a pain crisis or an acute chest syndrome, especially because of the preference of this virus for the respiratory tract.

- **Beta-thalassemia major and intermedia, and pyruvate kinase deficiency**: Risk of aggravating anemia. If you are transfused regularly, the transfusions must continue as scheduled (thalassemia major) or can be adapted according to the decision of your doctor (thalassemia intermedia).

- **Spherocytosis**: As with all generalized febrile infections, worsened anemia is possible.

- **Splenectomized (spleen removed) patients**: There is no increased risk of contracting the coronavirus as this is a viral infection.

### ➤ **Medical follow-up :**

Most non-urgent consultations in specialized centers are postponed. Do NOT cancel on your own, you will be notified. In case of doubt, contact your centre. Remote consultations (teleconsultations) may be offered to you. The renewal of prescriptions can be done remotely (e-mail, fax...).

**In case of symptoms (fever, cough, breathing difficulties...) : call your treating physician.** Depending on where you are hospitalized, the doctors treating you may not be familiar with the red blood cell disorder you have. You should therefore clearly and immediately state that you have a red blood cell disorder and **ask them to contact your treating physician systematically and early.**



**In all cases, do not forget to specify that you are suffering from a red blood cell disease.**

<p><b>G6PD deficit</b></p>	<p>- In case of fever, watch the colour of the urine, drink more than usual, use paracetamol without excess. - You should not take chloroquine (Plaquenil, Nivaquine).</p>
<p><b>Sickle cell disease</b></p>	<p>Respiratory signs (difficulty breathing, coughing, spitting...) can be linked to a virus (COVID-19 but also influenza or other viruses), a bacterial infection, but also to an acute chest syndrome linked to sickle cell disease. In addition, viruses (and potentially COVID-19) can trigger an acute chest syndrome. For sickle cell patients, oxygen therapy is already needed when saturation falls below 95%.</p>
<p><b>Splenectomized patients</b></p>	<p>In case of high fever a preventive antibiotic therapy is needed, according to the usual recommendations for you. Administration of aspirin is not routinely recommended.</p>

## If you are ill:

You have to **stay at home for a minimum of 7 days, and at least until the symptoms are gone** (if your symptoms last longer than 7 days, you will have to stay at home longer).

Staying at home means that **you do not leave the house**. You don't go shopping, you don't go out for a walk...

- You are allowed to go into your garden or use your terrace.
- You are also allowed to get out of the house briefly to check if your mail has been delivered.
- Avoid close and long contact with other people at all times.
- A family member or an acquaintance should do your errands for you. You can also have them delivered. Make sure you do not come into contact with the person doing your shopping or delivering your meals.
- Stay away from vulnerable people such as the elderly and persons with reduced immunity.
- At home, isolate yourself as much as possible from your housemates. Stay in different rooms, eat separately, sleep separately, use different bathrooms if you have more than one.
- Regularly ventilate the rooms you stay in.
- You can make your own coronavirus mask to protect your housemates (see [www.maakjemonmasker.be](http://www.maakjemonmasker.be) (in Dutch) or [www.faitesvotremasquebuccal.be](http://www.faitesvotremasquebuccal.be) (in French) for tips).
- **Strictly follow hygiene regulations such as washing your hands, and using paper tissues to cough.**

What do **YOU** do ?

What do **YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS AND OTHER CONTACTS** (such as colleagues) do?

Your housemates try to isolate themselves from you as best they can (see above).  
Desinfect the surfaces that are frequently touched (such as door handles, table, night table, toilet) once a day with bleach (1 tablespoon per liter water).

Your housemates or other contacts (such as colleagues) **do not have to go into isolation.**

They are still allowed to go outside, but they have to **comply with the general obligation to go outside as little as possible** (unless for work, shopping, sport).

**Strictly follow hygiene regulations such as washing your hands, and using paper tissues for coughing.**

➤ ***If the family members or contacts work in the care sector :***

Your family members or contacts working in the care sector **do not have to self-isolate at home either.**

As long as they do not have any health complaints (coughing, fever), they are allowed to continue working.

### Who is currently being tested for COVID-19?

1. Anyone whose clinical condition requires hospitalization AND whose clinician suspects COVID-19.
2. Any health professional (doctor, nurse, personnel of a nursing home and paramedical staff) in contact with people at risk, who meets the possible case definition AND who has a fever.
3. The first cases (up to a maximum of 5) that meet the definition of possible case, living in a community (for example: nursing home, prison, foster home ...).

Information number : 0800 14 689

### Contact center opening hours

- **Monday to Friday:** from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- **Week-end:** from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

If you have any questions, please send a message to [info-coronavirus@health.fgov.be](mailto:info-coronavirus@health.fgov.be)

# HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST VIRUSES SUCH AS CORONAVIRUS Covid-19 OR SEASONAL FLU?

1

WASH YOUR HANDS REGULARLY.



2

ALWAYS USE PAPER TISSUES. DISPOSE OF THE TISSUES IMMEDIATELY AFTER USE AND THROW THEM AWAY IN A CLOSED DUSTBIN.



3

IF YOU DON'T HAVE A TISSUE HANDY, SNEEZE OR COUGH INTO THE CREASE OF YOUR ELBOW.



4

IF YOU HAVE FLU-LIKE SYMPTOMS, STAY AT HOME.



ALL INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON  
[www.info-coronavirus.be](http://www.info-coronavirus.be)

