

# COVID-19

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

**VERY IMPORTANT: If you have fever, cough, shortness of breath, loss of taste/smell, or any other symptoms, you should contact Texas Oncology *before* visiting our clinics for scheduled appointments. Patients are required to wear a face mask to their clinic appointment. Face masks with a valve are not permitted. Many locations are only permitting patients in our clinics at this time. Patients who need a caregiver for special circumstances such as mobility, translation, or disability should contact our staff. We ask that you not bring your children with you to your appointments at this time.**

### **As a cancer patient, should I receive the COVID-19 vaccine?**

Texas Oncology agrees with leading infectious disease experts that all people should be vaccinated against COVID-19, including cancer patients. The COVID-19 vaccine reduces individual risk and slows the spread of the virus. Our COVID-19 task force, which includes physician leaders, nurses, and pharmacists dedicated to the health and safety of our patients, caregivers, and staff during the pandemic, strongly urges cancer patients and their families to get vaccinated as soon as possible.

### **As a cancer patient, am I at additional risk for catching COVID-19?**

Patients with underlying medical conditions, like heart or lung disease or diabetes, or compromised immune systems, including many cancer patients, are more susceptible to viruses, including COVID-19. Some cancer therapies, such as targeted drugs, steroids, as well as some cancer types, like blood cancers, can result in a weakened immune system.

### **As a cancer patient, if I am at higher risk, how can I protect myself?**

You, your caregivers, and close contacts can take proactive measures to protect yourselves and those around you from COVID-19, including:

- **Get vaccinated when authorized COVID-19 vaccines become available to you.**
- **Wear a face mask whenever you are around others.**
- **Practice social distancing. Stay a minimum six feet apart in all encounters with anyone who is not a member of your household and keep a safe distance from anyone who has been in contact with others outside of your home.**
- **Avoid crowds. Stay home if at all possible. Do not venture out if you do not feel well.**
- **Avoid close contact with sick people.**
- **Wash hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds and frequently. If soap and water are unavailable, use alcohol-based hand rub.**
- **Disinfect frequently touched surfaces with household cleaning spray or wipe.**
- **Call Texas Oncology first if you have questions or concerns.**

### **Should I wear a face mask?**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends covering your mouth and nose with a face covering when around others and in public. All patients and visitors are required to wear a mask in Texas Oncology clinics. Face masks with valves are not permitted.

### What precautions is Texas Oncology taking in light of the COVID-19 situation?

Texas Oncology is closely monitoring COVID-19, including the latest updates from the CDC. To reduce risk of exposure, we have implemented the following protocols and changes to how we operate, including:

- **Pre-screening patients by phone prior to appointments**
- **Urging patients with fever, cough, shortness of breath, or other concerning symptoms to call before coming to scheduled appointments**
- **Screening patients for symptoms at entrances to our locations**
- **Postponing non-urgent appointments and offering expanded telemedicine appointments and telepharmacy services when clinically appropriate**
- **Providing information for patients who may need COVID-19 testing**
- **Reinforcing guidelines for use of personal protective equipment, (e.g., face masks, gowns, gloves)**
- **Isolating patients who come into our locations exhibiting symptoms**
- **Limiting or prohibiting visitors to our locations (Visit [www.texasoncology.com/covid19](http://www.texasoncology.com/covid19) for a list of locations not permitting any visitors.)**

### What should I do if my caregiver has recently traveled, participated in an event with a large crowd, or engaged in other potentially risky activities?

You should be mindful of potential exposure risk in your contact with anyone, including a caregiver. You should limit direct contact with anyone with a known potential exposure risk for COVID-19, including caregivers. You, your caregivers, and other close contacts should wear face masks.

If your caregiver or close contact is sick, encourage them to seek medical attention, and avoid contact with them until they are well, e.g., free from fever for at least 72 hours. The CDC regularly posts updated recommendations on travel, face masks, and other safety measures at [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus).

### Where can I get more information?

Texas Oncology continues to keep our staff and patients updated as the COVID-19 situation evolves. For more information on COVID-19, Texas Oncology recommends the following resources:

- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [cdc.gov/coronavirus](http://cdc.gov/coronavirus)**
- **World Health Organization: [who.int/coronavirus](http://who.int/coronavirus)**
- **Texas Department of State Health Services: [dshs.state.tx.us/coronavirus](http://dshs.state.tx.us/coronavirus)**
- **Texas Oncology: [texasoncology.com/covid19](http://texasoncology.com/covid19)**