** Coronavirus (COVID-19) and HIV: Patient information**

There is a lot of information available in the news and online about COVID-19 and the guidance for the public and high-risk groups is changing all of the time and will continue to change as the situation evolves. We wanted to provide you with some basic information specific to people living with HIV, to direct you to reliable sources of updated information and finally to let you know how the Tayside HIV service will have to change to cope with this unusual situation.

**Will COVID-19 affect me more if I am living with HIV?**

There is no good evidence yet that people living with HIV are at higher risk of catching COVID-19 or experiencing more serious complications of it. However we have to be sensible and consider that some of our patients might be at higher risk and these include people who:

* Are not on anti-retroviral therapy
* Have a low CD4 count
* Have other additional medical problems including heart disease, lung disease and cancer
* Are over the age of 70
* Are pregnant

**What should I do if I think I might have COVID-19?**

You should follow the national advice which can be found on NHS Inform ([www.nhsinform.scot/coronavirus](http://www.nhsinform.scot/coronavirus))

Please do not attend any healthcare facility (including your HIV appointment) if you have symptoms or have recently travelled to a high-risk area. The HIV Service cannot help you with COVID-19.

**Should I be changing my day to day life because of COVID-19?**

Everyone’s lives are going to change over the next few months. Everyone is currently being advised to follow basic infection control measures and you can find out about them at NHS Inform. It is likely that as a country we will move through different phases of restrictions in the coming months and people who are considered “vulnerable” will be first to be protected in this way.

Because the information is changing all of the time, please keep checking these reliable sources of information for updates:

NHS Inform [www.nhsinform.scot/coronavirus](http://www.nhsinform.scot/coronavirus)

HIV Scotland [www.hiv.scot](http://www.hiv.scot)

If you don’t have internet access, HIV Scotland are running a telephone helpline on **0131 558 3713** between 10am and 6pm Monday to Friday.

**What can I do to minimise my risk?**

Please follow all of the guidance given by the authorities in terms of hygiene, social-distancing and self-isolation. If you are in doubt then choose the safest option.

Keep taking your anti-retroviral medicines which help to keep your immune system as strong as possible.

We have compiled a list of people who would benefit from a vaccine (Prevenar) which protects against some forms of pneumonia which can sometimes be a complication of flu-like illnesses. Most of our patients have already had the vaccine. We will be in touch with you individually if you require it.

**How is the HIV clinic going to change?**

The HIV clinic will be very different over the next few months for a few reasons:

* The East Block at Ninewells Hospital has been closed to cope with the COVID-19 situation
* We want to keep people as far away from the hospital as possible unless it is essential
* Our staff are being asked to work in other areas to support the COVID-19 response

If you have recently had an appointment and have a supply of medicines then these changes might not affect you at all.

If you are due to be seen for a routine appointment in the coming months then there are various options for you including:

* Picking up/delivery of medicines only
* Telephone consultations where needed
* Vaccines as discussed above
* Blood tests only when absolutely necessary

The team are meeting every week to discuss all of the patients who are due to be seen in order that we can meet each patient’s individual needs as safely as possible.

All face-to-face consultations will take place in the sexual health clinic at Ninewells Hospital in Dundee on a Wednesday afternoon.

**Contacting us**

As you can imagine, the HIV team are very busy trying to re-organise our service. We would be most grateful if you could try to find the information you require online before contacting us. If you can’t find what you are looking for you can contact us by email [Tay-UHB.arvservice@nhs.net](mailto:Tay-UHB.arvservice@nhs.net), by text 07768058301 and by phone 01382 496554. We can’t guarantee that we will be available to answer your query immediately but we will do our best to get back to you within 48 hours. You will also find information about our local services, changes and closures at [www.sexualhealthtayside.org](http://www.sexualhealthtayside.org)

Finally, we wish you all the best and look forward to seeing you again as normal when services return to normal. In the meantime please be patient and kind when dealing with NHS and social care staff – we’re doing our best.