



Managing your infection risk



Blood cancer and many of its treatments can stop your immune system from working well. When your immune system is weakened, you're more likely to get infections. They can last longer and be more difficult to get rid of too.

Taking steps to lower your risk of infection can help you live well with blood cancer and its treatments.

Why preventing infections matters

Common infections that may be mild or short-lived in other people may affect you more. You may find a bout of food poisoning or getting a cold makes you unwell for longer. Some infections may become severe and even life-threatening.

Infections can affect your health, wellbeing and everyday life. They can also cause delays to treatment and affect how you cope with and recover from it.

Talk to your haematology team about what sort of infections you need to look out for.

Reducing your risk of infections

To reduce your risk, try to support your immune system and reduce contact with germs.

Take care to:

- ✓ Eat a healthy, balanced diet
- ✓ Have vaccinations you're eligible for
- ✓ Keep active
- ✓ Look after your teeth and gums
- ✓ Manage your stress levels
- ✓ Store and prepare food safely
- ✓ Wash your hands and body

Avoid if you can:

- ✗ Alcohol
- ✗ Animal poo or pee
- ✗ Crowds
- ✗ People who have an infection
- ✗ Cuts and grazes
- ✗ Smoking and vaping
- ✗ Travel to high-risk places

You could consider:

- Wearing a face mask when in busy or crowded places
- Using a nasal spray if you get repeated colds or flu-like illnesses
- Talking to your employer, clients or place of study about how they can help you



There's always a balance between being cautious and living a fulfilling life. Everyone is different. Do what makes you comfortable and feels right for you.

If you have a high risk of infection, you may need medicines to help prevent them.



These may include antibiotics, antivirals and antifungal medicines. Some people benefit from medicines called immunoglobulins that boost your antibodies.

When to get help

Contact your haematology team or GP immediately if you think you have an infection. Symptoms and signs to report include a high temperature (37.5°C to 38°C or higher) and feeling unwell.

Ask your team for a full list of symptoms to look out for and check how to get help quickly. Out of hours, some units offer a 24-hour haematology helpline, or you may call NHS 111 for help. It's important to get treatment as soon as possible.

We have more **information on managing your infection risk** to help you. Visit leukaemiacare.org.uk and search for 'Managing your infection risk' or scan the QR code.



Need support or information?

- Scan the QR code or visit leukaemiacare.org.uk
- Call our freephone helpline on **08088 010 444**
- Send a WhatsApp to **07500 068065**
- Email support@leukaemiacare.org.uk



This information is aimed at people in the UK. We do our best to make sure it is accurate and up to date but it should not replace advice from your health professional. If you have any feedback or you'd like a list of our sources, please email information@leukaemiacare.org.uk.

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