

# COVID-19 Care in the Community - Case Management in Adults in Pharmacy Operational Guide

March 2022

## Medication Management Consult: Immunosuppressants

### **Eligibility Criteria**

Clients in COVID-19 mandatory isolation due to being COVID-19 positive, taking long-term immunosuppressants.

Referrals for this service may come from:

- Prescriber via email or phone or noted on prescription.
- Welfare or other agencies such as Tihei Mauri Ora and the local hubs who provide support.
- General Practice
- Health Hawke's Bay.
- DHB services.

### **Background**

Those on immunosuppressants have reduced capacity to fight infections and are subsequently at higher risk of severe illness. Patients should continue immunosuppressants while they remain well, however they may need their medications withheld or reduced and/or require additional monitoring once they become acutely unwell.

### **Planning for COVID-19 in the community**

Discuss with the patient about planning if they become unwell with COVID-19, including making sure the patient knows who their key contact is and telephone details for the specialist service(s) which they are under. Cytotoxic medications can cause bone marrow suppression and should generally be avoided in active infection, this will need to be discussed with a prescriber.

Signs of deterioration may be similar to Covid-19 symptoms. Maintain a low threshold for referring these patients.

### **Specific medications**

Including but not limited to prednisone, dexamethasone, azathioprine, mercaptopurine, methotrexate, mycophenolate mofetil, ciclosporin, tacrolimus, sirolimus, thalidomide, lenalidomide, biological medications (e.g. adalimumab, etanercept), cyclophosphamide, hydroxycarbamide, chlorambucil, busulfan, melphalan and other anti-cancer medications.

### **Factors to discuss with your patient**

<b>If this happens...</b>	<b>...then do this</b>
Headache, muscle aches/pains, fever >38 °C	Use paracetamol NOT NSAIDs
Signs of sepsis e.g. high or low temperature >38°C or <36.5 °C, flu-like symptoms, shivering and sweating, rash, agitation, confusion, sore throat.	Contact relevant specialist clinic or GP

Mild dry cough, shortness of breath or reduction in Oxygen saturation if using pulse oximeter	Oxygen saturation $\leq$ 93% or decrease of $\geq$ 3% from baseline, contact GP immediately. If purely a dry cough then a teaspoon of honey may help relieve symptoms.
Signs of dehydration e.g. vomiting, diarrhoea, poor oral intake, poor urine output, dark-coloured urine, dry mouth, thirst, dizziness	Contact relevant specialist clinic or GP
Signs of liver injury e.g. abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, dark urine, fatigue, jaundice, fever.	Contact relevant specialist clinic or GP

**Tools available:**

- **Patient fact sheet: COVID-19 Seeking medical help – when and how**
- **ISBAR communication framework between health care workers.**

**References:**

[Medicines and COVID-19 | Christchurch Medicines Information Service](#)

**Authored by:** Kirsty Cook    **Reviewed by:** Brendan Duck

**Disclaimer:** The information and advice contained in this document is aimed at health professionals, based upon evidence from available resources at our disposal at the time of publication, and reflects best practice. However, this information is not a substitute for clinical judgment and individualised medical advice. Health Hawke's Bay accepts no responsibility or liability for consequences arising from use of this information.