

COVID-19: CHS Message to the Canadian bleeding disorder community

[Update: April 15, 2020]

The Canadian Hemophilia Society (CHS) has been following the rapidly evolving COVID-19 crisis and is updating our community regularly via our various communication channels. We recognize that people with bleeding disorders and their caregivers may have questions related to their health care and treatment products.

Comprehensive care

At a time when some of the staff in bleeding disorder treatment centres are working from home, or may even be re-assigned to other duties, **it is more important than ever to stay healthy**. This means:

- For those on home-based therapy, follow your prophylaxis regimen exactly as recommended.
- Avoid activities that put you at higher risk for bleeding.
- Keep in touch with your treatment centre teams via telephone and MyCBDR/iCHIP.
- Find out now what to do in the event you need emergency care. (Emergency departments are open and are taking all the required precautions to keep people safe.)
- Do not avoid seeking emergency care out of fear of infection.

Supply of factor concentrates, non-factor therapies

The CHS remains in contact with the manufacturers and distributors—Canadian Blood Services and Héma-Québec— of factor products and non-factor therapies for the Canadian market. Nothing has changed since our last communication. **Inventories are at normal levels**. The manufacturers currently foresee no interruption to the normal supply.

Home inventory of factor concentrates, non-factor therapies

As everybody knows, public health authorities have issued instructions on “social distancing.” These public health measures may mean changes to the normal pick-up of home inventory. **The CHS recommends that you contact your bleeding disorder treatment centre directly for instructions**. Ask them:

- What is the minimum inventory I should have on hand (for example, a 3- or 4-week minimum supply in case I need to self-isolate or self-quarantine at home)?

- What is the maximum inventory I should have so I can limit the number of visits to the hospital? (**Important: Do not hoard large quantities; if everybody did so, we could have shortages.**)
- What is the best way to pick up inventory while maintaining “social distance?” For example, can I meet the hospital staff outside, pop the trunk of my car and have the product placed in the trunk?

MyCBDR and iCHIP

While in-person visits to your treatment centre will be reduced during this time, MyCBDR and iCHIP users can take advantage of these tools to report all their bleeds and infusions to their care teams in real time, thereby maintaining strong “virtual” contact, and helping keep track of inventories.

Safety of coagulation therapies

Coronaviruses similar to COVID-19—like SARS and MERS—have been well studied over the last 15 years. It has been clearly shown that the viral inactivation processes used for plasma derivatives, including plasma-derived factor concentrates, eliminate coronaviruses. **Factor products continue to be safe.**

Some people with bleeding disorders may require transfusions. There is no evidence at this time that the coronaviruses are transmitted through red blood cells, platelets or plasma. **Fresh blood components continue to be safe.**

If you have COVID-19

Having a bleeding disorder does not put a person at greater risk for serious complications of COVID-19. However, COVID-19 can be more serious for certain people, notably those who:

- have cardiovascular disease
- have high blood pressure
- have kidney disease
- are obese
- have diabetes
- have asthma and lung issues
- have HIV
- are over the age of 60.

Nevertheless, if you contract COVID-19, it is important that you contact your treatment centre for advice. This is especially critical if you have to be admitted to hospital for COVID-19.

Blood, platelet and plasma donation

Continuing to donate blood, platelets and plasma is critical at a time when many people who normally donate are urged to stay home to avoid exposure to COVID-19 or to protect others. Both Canadian Blood Services and Héma-Québec remind us that:

- It is safe to donate blood, platelets and plasma during the COVID-19 epidemic.
- Donations are critical for patients.
- Blood donors should book and keep their appointments to prevent shortages.

The CHS urges people to closely follow the recommendations of federal, provincial and local public health authorities to reduce risk to you and your loved ones.

**If you have any questions or concerns,
do not hesitate to write to us at chs@hemophilia.ca.**