

## Handy fact sheet

### Clozapine, blood testing and the Coronavirus/COVID-19 outbreak

#### **Are there any extra problems with clozapine and Coronavirus?**

- With the current Coronavirus outbreak, health services are at full stretch (or beyond) and so some changes may need to be made
- Your normal routine may have to change e.g. staff may be ill themselves, having to self-isolate, transport may not be available etc.
- We will try our very best to carry on as normal but this may not be possible e.g. your blood testing frequency might change; your supplies may be different.

#### **Am I more at risk of getting Coronavirus if I am taking clozapine?**

#### **You are at no extra risk of catching COVID-19, as far as we know, if:**

- Your blood is OK (or 'green')
- You follow the advice on reducing your risk of catching it.

As you know, clozapine can reduce the number of some cells in the blood of around 2-3 in every hundred people taking it, mainly during the first 18 weeks.

This can make it harder for your body to fight infections, but only if you get this blood problem.

#### **What should I do if I start to get symptoms?**

If you start to show symptoms of Coronavirus then:

- Self-isolate for 14 days
- Contact your team as soon as you can
- Carry on taking clozapine, unless told not to
- Your team may need to arrange other ways for you to have your blood tests e.g. if you usually go to a GP surgery or use a clozapine clinic with on-the-spot testing for your bloods, and get your clozapine supplies.

If it is the weekend, out-of-hours, or you are in any way concerned about your symptoms please contact **NHS 111**. You must tell them you take clozapine.

#### **What should I do if I get the full symptoms?**

- The key symptoms of Coronavirus (COVID-19) are a fever or high temperature, or a continuous dry cough
  - These could also be signs that your white cells or neutrophils are falling
- If you get a fever or cough it is vital that you contact your team again, straight away
- Your team will advise you on what to do, whether you need any extra blood tests, and will arrange this directly with you.

**Tell your team if you get the full symptoms, even out of hours. You may need an extra blood test, especially in first 4 months.**

#### **What should I do if I have confirmed Coronavirus?**

- By this stage you would have healthcare help so please take their advice
- Make sure you tell everyone you're on clozapine
- Also make sure your mental health team know, as they will need to coordinate supplies and treatment.

#### **General Advice**

It is important to try and limit your chances of getting Coronavirus and follow the NHS advice:

- Wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds and always wash them when you get home
- Use hand sanitiser gel if there is no soap and water
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- Put used tissues in the bin straight away and wash your hands afterwards
- Avoid contact with people who are unwell and keep about 6ft away from other people
- Don't touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean. This can transfer a virus to your body
- If you have a fever, stick to paracetamol. Don't take extra ibuprofen (Nurofen®) as this might make Coronavirus symptoms worse.

#### **Your team can be contacted on:**

Many thanks to the Senior Lead for Mental Health from North East London and the Senior Mental Health Pharmacist from Pennine Care NHS Trust for allowing us to share their work with you. If you have any suggested improvements in these rapidly changing times please let us know.

**The small print:** This leaflet is to help you understand more about clozapine and Coronavirus. Go to our website for fuller answers to these and many other questions e.g. driving, women's health, how it works, doses and interactions, and about the conditions.

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