



## Inflammatory bowel disease and the Wuhan novel Coronavirus

### 1. What is Wuhan novel coronavirus?

Wuhan novel coronavirus is a contagious virus that causes lung infection much like influenza or flu. The virus originated in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China but cases have now been confirmed in all provinces of China and a small number abroad, including Japan, Thailand, the Philippines, the USA, Canada, France, Germany and the UK. Africa has been relatively spared from the virus although the first African case was diagnosed in Egypt recently. This may be due to most countries in Africa unable to diagnose the virus. South Africa's National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) has the capabilities to diagnose the Wuhan novel coronavirus.

### 2. What are the symptoms?

Common symptoms of Wuhan novel coronavirus include fever, coughing, tightness of the chest and shortness of breath. This particularly applies to people who have travelled to Wuhan and the affected areas in the last 14 days and are exhibiting symptoms such as fever, fatigue, cough, difficulty breathing, sore throat or runny nose.

### 3. What can I do to lower my risk?

As with all viral illnesses, there are precautions we can all take reduce the risk of catching or spreading the virus:

- avoid close contact with anyone with cold or flu-like symptoms
- cover your mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing, using a tissue
- throw the tissue away quickly and carefully
- wash your hands regularly with soap and water
- avoid sharing food, drink and utensils with people who are sick

### 4. Who is at extra risk from Wuhan novel coronavirus?

Generally, Wuhan novel coronavirus can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people, and those with long term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease.

### 5. Am I at extra risk because I am taking immunosuppression treatment?

Immunosuppressive medicine for Crohn's and Colitis include prednisone (steroids), azathioprine, 6-mercaptopurine, methotrexate, infliximab (Revellex), adalimumab (Humira) and ustekinumab (Stelara)

People taking immunosuppressants for their Crohn's Disease or Ulcerative Colitis **ARE NOT** at increased risk of catching Wuhan novel coronavirus, however they **MAY** be at extra risk of complications from the virus if they are infected. Stopping immunosuppressants to avoid contracting the Wuhan novel coronavirus **IS NOT** advisable and could lead to a severe flare of your IBD.

In the majority of cases, you will be advised to continue with your current treatment as there is the potential for no a flare of your IBD and subsequent need for drugs such as steroids if maintenance treatment is stopped.

All IBD patients on immunosuppressants should keep a thermometer at home and check their temperature if feeling unwell. A temperature more than 37.5°C may indicate an infection and you should notify your doctor.

People on immunosuppressants should seek advice from their gastroenterologist if they develop any symptoms of either seasonal Influenza or Wuhan novel coronavirus.

IBD Africa will be following developments regarding the Wuhan novel Coronavirus and posting updates on their Facebook page [https://www.facebook.com/pg/lbdafrica/posts/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/lbdafrica/posts/?ref=page_internal)