How to protect ourselves

# Coronavirus: the latest information for people with lung disease and respiratory conditions

**The new coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) continues to spread in Switzerland. In view of this, the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH) has issued some behavioural rules aimed at protecting against infection. The new coronavirus is particularly dangerous for people aged 65 and over and anyone with a pre-existing respiratory condition or lung disease. These people are advised to take special care in complying with the current recommendations from the Federal Office of Public Health.**

## Severe asthma



Around 2-8 % of the Swiss population have asthma. However, only a fraction of these have severe asthma.
If you have severe asthma, your doctor will have informed you of this and you will either be undergoing immunotherapy or taking corticosteroids/immunosuppressants in the form of tablets or injections.

Recommendation: The majority (95 %) of asthma patients do not have severe asthma and are advised to comply with the general recommendations of the FOPH. These are not considered high risk. For individuals with severe asthma, however, special protection measures are necessary. Anyone with severe asthma should comply with the measures for particularly vulnerable people. If symptoms worsen, a phone consultation should be arranged with a doctor.

## COPD



More than 5 % of adults in Switzerland, that is around 400,000 people, have COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease). COPD is a slow developing, chronic, non-infectious, incurable lung disease.

Recommendation: All patients diagnosed with COPD belong to the group of particularly vulnerable people. These individuals are advised to take special precautions to protect themselves from SARS-CoV-2 and comply with the measures for particularly vulnerable people. If symptoms worsen, a phone consultation should be arranged with a doctor.

## Sleep apnea



In Switzerland, there are an estimated 150,000 people with sleep apnea. Sleep apnea is when an individual's breathing stops and starts during sleep. These short interruptions make it impossible to sleep properly.

Recommendation: The majority of people affected by sleep apnea are advised to comply with the FOPH's general recommendations and are not considered particularly vulnerable. Sleep apnea sufferers aged over 65, however, or with concomitant diseases do need to take special precautions and comply with the measures for particularly vulnerable people. If symptoms worsen, a phone consultation should be arranged with a doctor.

## People on home oxygen therapy



Home respiration is a form of therapy for people with respiratory disorders. These individuals receive temporary or permanent artificial respiration on an outpatient basis. A variety of different diseases can be responsible for the impaired lung function.

Recommendation: Patients receiving home oxygen therapy belong to the group of particularly vulnerable people. These individuals are advised to take special precautions to protect themselves from SARS-CoV-2 and comply with the measures for particularly vulnerable people. If symptoms worsen, a phone consultation should be arranged with a doctor.

## Tuberculosis

**Tuberculosis** is an infectious disease transmitted by tuberculosis bacteria. The most common form (in approximately 70 % of cases) is pulmonary tuberculosis. Other forms are not contagious. A **latent tuberculosis infection** means that a person has come into contact with tuberculosis bacteria at some point in their life. These people are neither sick nor contagious.

Recommendation: Patients who have been or are currently being treated for tuberculosis or latent tuberculosis do not belong to the group of particularly vulnerable people. These individuals are advised to comply with the general recommendations of the FOPH.

## Measures for particularly vulnerable people

- Stay at home and avoid crowds. Gatherings of more than 5 people are prohibited.
- Do not visit family, friends or acquaintances. Phone or write to one another.
- Do not visit children and adolescents or people with flu-like symptoms.
- Persons living in the same household should comply with the protective measures of the FOPH to the letter.
- Particularly vulnerable persons should:
  - Avoid direct contact with anyone not living in the same household
  - Have no contact with anyone diagnosed with SARS-CoV-2
  - Not use public transport
  - Ask a neighbour or acquaintance to do your shopping for you and leave it in front of your door
  - Stop smoking
- Take your medication as prescribed by your doctor. Discuss adjustments only in urgent cases with your GP.
- Note: Inhaled steroids are not considered immunosuppressive therapy.
- Employers will allow particularly vulnerable people to work from home, taking all necessary organisational and technical measures to support this.
- If the particularly vulnerable person can only work on site, employers must ensure that they are able to comply with the recommended hygiene and behavioural measures (hand washing, social distancing). If an employer is unable to meet these requirements, they must continue to pay the particularly vulnerable person's salary. A particularly vulnerable person must make a personal declaration to their employer, advising them of their particular vulnerability. The employer may request a medical certificate in some cases.

For new and up-to-date information, please visit the FOPH website for people at special risk or contact the 24/7 infoline: +41 58 463 00 00.

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