

Delivering care through collaboration

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Dear Patient,

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Update for patients of the Scottish Adult Congenital Cardiac Service

As a Scottish Adult Congenital Cardiac Service (SACCS) national or regional patient, we are writing to you to make you aware of current guidance in relation to coronavirus and how it may relate to you. The information in this letter relates only to your congenital heart disease. It does not relate to any other health conditions you may have.

Whilst it is expected that many people will catch the virus over the course of the coming weeks and months, the risk of becoming seriously unwell as a result is low, particularly for children and young adults. However, as this virus is new, we do not yet know whether patients with an underlying congenital heart condition will be at any increased risk from the virus.

If you display worsening symptoms of COVID-19: It is important you seek advice early by calling NHS 24 on 111 and telling them about your heart condition.

You should continue your usual medications unless told otherwise by a health professional. If you are admitted to hospital, please inform the SACCS team.

Advice for patients with chronic heart disease

The UK and Scottish Governments have stated that patients with 'chronic heart disease' are likely to be at risk of severe illness from coronavirus.

Whilst technically all patients with a congenital heart condition and those with aortopathies affecting heart valves and function have 'chronic heart disease' it is likely that most of you will be at no greater risk than the general population. This is because your condition may be mild or because your heart functions well even if there are ongoing issues. For those of you who fall into this category, including patients with patent foramen ovale (PFO), **we advise following the recommendations for the entire population on hand washing and social distancing.**

Advice for those considered extremely vulnerable patients who are at increased risk

Patients with severe forms of congenital heart disease and/or who are treated for worsening heart function may be at increased risk of becoming seriously unwell from Coronavirus.

Your heart may not cope as well if you catch coronavirus. If, at any point, you think you have developed symptoms of coronavirus, such as a new, continuous cough and/or high temperature (above 37.8 °C), seek clinical advice by phoning the NHS on 111. **Do this as soon as you get symptoms.**

Patients in these groups should adopt shielding measures for at least 12 weeks. This means taking all measures possible to avoid catching coronavirus, and avoiding any face-to-face contact.

- Fontan or single ventricle circulation (one pumping chamber)
- Low blood oxygen levels so-called cyanosis (oxygen saturations below 92%)
- Systemic right ventricle (the right pumping chamber is the main supply of blood to your body) – you have had a Mustard or Senning operation or have congenitally corrected transposition of the great arteries.
- Heart failure or take regular medication to improve heart function
- Pulmonary hypertension or Eisenmenger syndrome
- Di George syndrome (also called 22q11 microdeletion or velo-cardio-facial syndrome)
- Pregnant women with heart conditions

Supporting pregnant women with heart conditions

The government guidance states that pregnant women with significant heart disease, whether congenital or acquired, should also regard themselves as **extremely vulnerable** also and follow the advice above on **shielding**.

Members of the team who care for women with heart disease will review each individual case and plan follow-up.

Where you can get more information

If you are unsure if you fall into any of these categories, please contact the SACCS team in the usual way (email: saccsnurse@gjnh.scot.nhs.uk, phone: 07795 953 070).

The SACCS pages of our hospital website have up to date guidance:

<https://hospital.nhsgoldenjubilee.co.uk/general-information/coronavirus-covid-19/congenital-heart-disease>

NHS Inform has advice and guidance on **social distancing**, **self-isolation** and **shielding**:

www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19

Changes to the SACCS service

The Scottish Adult Congenital Cardiac Service will continue to support you during the coronavirus pandemic. Our doctors, nurses and staff will do their best to help our patients and maintain essential services that are needed in this difficult time.

We are dealing with a higher volume of enquiries at present, so if you do need to contact us, it may take us longer than one working day to respond to any non-urgent enquiries.

In light of the coronavirus pandemic we are regularly reviewing the way we work in SACCS.

Outpatient Clinics

Until further notice there will be no routine in-person outpatient appointments. Instead we will review patients by telephone or with a video call (NHS Near Me).

For anyone who does need to be seen in person, this will be arranged with appropriate tests where necessary.

Operations and keyhole procedures

We will continue to perform **urgent** cardiac surgery and keyhole procedures. If you are on the waiting list for either of these, we will be in contact with you by telephone.

If you have any concerns regarding your heart, then you should contact the SACCS team in the usual way (email: saccsnurse@gjnh.scot.nhs.uk, phone: 07795 953 070) but remain mindful that we are dealing with a higher volume of queries at present and there will be reduced staff numbers while we deal with the coronavirus emergency. We will make every effort to reply to you as soon as possible.

If you are having a non-COVID-19 medical emergency, please dial 999.

On behalf of the SACCS Team

Stay safe

Yours sincerely



Dr Niki Walker
Consultant Cardiologist