



## **For attention of GP practices: MPN patients and coronavirus (COVID-19)**

Blood cancer affects the immune system. Adults with blood cancer may have a compromised immune system and therefore be at high risk of serious illness from coronavirus.

Even people not on treatment (eg on 'watch and wait' or active surveillance/monitoring) may have compromised immune systems due to the cancer itself.

MPNs (myeloproliferative neoplasms) are types of blood cancer.

The following are MPNs (and blood cancers):

- Essential thrombocythaemia (ET)
- Polycythaemia vera (PV)
- Myelofibrosis
- MPN unclassified
- MPN/MDS overlap
- Chronic eosinophilic leukaemia
- Chronic neutrophilic leukaemia

The World Health Organisation has classified MPNs as cancers since 2008. See the most recent 'World Health Organization classification of myeloid neoplasms and acute leukemia':

[https://www.who.int/medical\\_devices/diagnostics/selection\\_in-vitro/selection\\_in-vitro-meetings/00035\\_07\\_WHO\\_2391.full.pdf](https://www.who.int/medical_devices/diagnostics/selection_in-vitro/selection_in-vitro-meetings/00035_07_WHO_2391.full.pdf)

Since the start of the pandemic, we have learned that people with MPNs have a higher chance of getting seriously ill from coronavirus and of dying with it. A recent meta-analysis of studies found that 34% of people with MPN with coronavirus died – this is the same rate as across all blood cancers together<sup>i</sup>, and is a higher rate than other cancers.<sup>ii</sup>

It is crucial that people with MPN are classed as clinically extremely vulnerable and are on the Shielded Patients List. This is vital to ensure they are invited for their vaccine at the appropriate time.

People with MPNs should be in group 4 of the vaccine roll-out, as they are clinically extremely vulnerable to coronavirus.



There are still MPN patients who are not on the Shielded Patient List and remain at high risk of severe illness from coronavirus. They must be added to the list and be offered their covid vaccine imminently.

## **Guidance across the UK states that people with MPNs are clinically extremely vulnerable**

The NHS and the government's criteria for clinically extremely vulnerable includes "people with cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment" – this includes MPN patients. This is the same guidance in [England](#), [Scotland](#), [Wales](#) and [Northern Ireland](#).

MPN Voice have a statement on their website, clarifying that MPN patients should be offered the vaccine in priority group 4, if not earlier due to age: <https://www.mpnvoice.org.uk/news/covid-19-vaccine-for-people-with-mpns/>

Professor Claire Harrison, Professor of MPNs and Clinical Director at Guy's and St Thomas's, also says "Traditionally many doctors and patients have struggled with the concept that MPNs like ET, PV and MF are blood cancers. This has thrown up many issues with shielding and the vaccine. But available data shows that MPN patients are at higher risk of dying from coronavirus."

## **How to add patients to the Shielded Patients List**

GPs can and should add MPN patients to the Shielded Patients List. There is guidance on how to do this across the UK here:

### **England**

- Add the code '1300561000000107' to their patient record.
- For GPs – <https://digital.nhs.uk/coronavirus/shielded-patient-list/guidance-for-general-practice#how-to-flag-patients-as-high-risk>
- For hospitals - <https://digital.nhs.uk/coronavirus/shielded-patient-list/spl-guidance-for-hospitals>
- [Book their covid vaccine](#)



## Scotland

- Add the code '9d44' with a flag/alert to their patient record.
- Notify your health board's local coordinator. Send the patient's name, CHI number and shielding group (cancer) to your region's shielding team eg [COVIDShielding@ggc.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:COVIDShielding@ggc.scot.nhs.uk) or [nhsh.nhshshielding@nhs.scot](mailto:nhsh.nhshshielding@nhs.scot)
- NHS Highland has a web page explaining how – see the section on 'Decision to shield' – <https://tam.nhsh.scot/home/covid-19-coronavirus/shielding-covid-19/>
- **Book their covid vaccine**

## Wales

- You can find a list of patients who are on the shielding list through the Primary Care Portal.
- To add a patient to the shielding list, add the code '65Z.. Infectious disease prevention/control NOS' to their patient record.
- For hospitals – tell your Health Board's Information Department, who have access to the shielding list and who regularly submit new additions for the shielding list to the NHS Wales Informatics Service.
- **Book their covid vaccine**

## Northern Ireland

- Use the Primary Care intranet site for guidance and searches you can run on EMIS and Vision to manage high-risk patients.
- **Book their covid vaccine**

If GP's are unsure about a patient's condition, they should speak with their specialist treating team (eg haematology). But the NHS and government does include all MPN patients in the clinically extremely vulnerable category. The RCGP has guidance on how to flag patients as clinically extremely vulnerable.



## Support from Blood Cancer UK

If you have any patients affected by blood cancer, you can signpost them to Blood Cancer UK. We are also very happy to speak to GPs and other healthcare professionals if helpful.

Our support line offers emotional and practical support. It is free to call on [0808 2080 888](tel:08082080888) (Mon-Fri, 10am-7pm, Sat-Sun, 10am-1pm) or email [support@bloodcancer.org.uk](mailto:support@bloodcancer.org.uk)

Our website has up-to-date information about blood cancer, coronavirus, and living with blood cancer at [www.bloodcancer.org.uk](http://www.bloodcancer.org.uk)

### This document is from:



and Professor Claire Harrison,  
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<sup>i</sup> <https://ashpublications.org/blood/article/136/25/2881/469789/Outcomes-of-patients-with-hematologic-malignancies>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://bloodcancer.org.uk/news/does-having-blood-cancer-put-you-greater-risk-coronavirus/>