

Arthritis and COVID-19 – What you need to know

Date: 19 August, 2021

There are confirmed cases of community transmission of the Delta variant of COVID-19 in New Zealand and Arthritis New Zealand encourages people to stay up to date with Ministry of Health information about it.

The following advice is from Arthritis New Zealand Medical Advisor Assoc. Prof. Andrew Harrison.

The Delta variant of COVID-19 in New Zealand is more easily transmitted than previous variants. New Zealand is currently at Alert Level 4 and mask-wearing when in contact with people outside of your bubble is now mandatory. Schools, events and sports are canceled and people are urged to Stay Home.

Stay up to date with Alert Level changes on the COVID-19 website.

Government's dedicated COVID-19 website - www.covid19.govt.nz

We encourage people to follow advice from their doctor or specialist about how and when to book your COVID-19 vaccine and find out information specific to you.

Patients taking methotrexate are minimally, if at all, at increased risk of infection, including flu and COVID-19. There is a small increased risk of infection for patients taking biologic therapies.

Please note that:

1. The Delta variant is more contagious than other variations of COVID-19, and
2. any infection risk for arthritis patients is linked more to arthritis itself than to the disease-modifying drugs used for arthritis.
3. If you have a flare of arthritis you may require steroids, which increases the risk of infection more than any other drug used in arthritis.

It is therefore important that you keep taking your arthritis treatment, including biological therapies.

Patients on biologics who become feverish should seek advice from their GP and/or rheumatologist, and stop taking the biologic until the fever has resolved. This is the standard advice for patients on biologics who develop any infection.