

Important Information about COVID-19 and Research Participation

At the University of Pittsburgh, the protection of our research participants is of utmost importance which is why this additional information regarding COVID-19 is being provided to you.

COVID-19 refers to the Coronavirus that is being spread across people in our communities. We need to provide you with important information about COVID-19, and to tell you about ways your study participation might change because of COVID-19 related risk.

If you are considering joining a study at this time or are currently enrolled in a study, it is important that you consider the following information to determine if study participation is right for you at this time.

How is COVID-19 spread? COVID-19 is a respiratory virus spread by respiratory droplets, mainly from person-to-person. This can happen between people who are in close contact with one another (less than 6 feet). It is also possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object (such as a doorknob or counter surface) that has the virus on it, then touching their mouth, nose or eyes.

Can COVID-19 be prevented? Current ways to minimize the risk of exposure to COVID-19 include “social distancing” which is a practice to decrease the potential for direct exposure to others who may have been exposed to COVID-19, for example by avoiding large gatherings or refraining from shaking hands with others. It is important to understand that since study participation may include increased travel outside of your home and increased exposure to others within a clinical care environment or research site it may increase your exposure to COVID-19. At this time there is no vaccination to prevent COVID-19 infection.

What are the risks of COVID-19? For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. While we are still learning about this virus, the information we have right now suggests that about 3 of 100 people who are infected might die from the virus.

Who is most at risk? Individuals over 60 and with chronic conditions such as cancer, diabetes and lung disease have the highest rates of severe disease from the infection.

How could your participation in this research change as a result of COVID-19? There are several ways we try to minimize your risk. If possible, we limit the number of times you have to come to a clinical care or research site. We ask every research participant if they have the symptoms of COVID-19 or have been in close contact with anyone who has or had COVID-19. During your research visits, we try to reduce the time you are exposed to other people as much as possible. If you are suspected to be positive for COVID-19, there may be last minute changes to how research procedures are performed [such as a change from an in-person visit to a telephone call] or cancellations of research tests or procedures to ensure your safety. It is even possible that your research procedures will be put on hold or stopped because of COVID-19.

The information related to risks of COVID-19 changes every day. This is being monitored so that the most current information is being provided to you through our study teams. If you have specific questions or concerns about COVID-19 and your participation in research, please talk to your study team.

Adapted with permission from Johns Hopkins University Human Research Protection Program