

The Sri Lanka College of Haematologists recommends following steps to prevent infection in the vulnerable patient groups we manage and to avoid transmission of disease to health care staff involved in direct patient care and diagnostics.

**Please Note: These recommendations are supplementary to the measures recommended by the Ministry of Health and individual institutions.**

### Haematology Clinics/Centers

**All the medical officers, Consultants, nursing and helping staff at haematology care centers, units, day centers or clinics should take appropriate personal protection measures recommended by MoH.**

**Ensure all work tops, clinic tables etc. cleaned at regular intervals using appropriate antiseptics recommended by MoH.**

1. Minimise attendance of patients to clinics by discouraging clinic visits of stable patients. Eg ITP with stable platelet counts.
2. Discourage other accompanying people entering clinics.
3. Encourage keeping distance between patients when they are awaiting medical consultation.
4. Reduce waiting time in clinics by (whenever appropriate and possible)
  - a. deferring blood tests when it is not essential
  - b. sending off with drugs without waiting for the results. (In such situations risks should be assessed of expected results and only be decided by haematologist/medical officers) Patient contact information should be taken appropriately and once results are reviewed by a medical officer/consultant, necessary action would be communicated as required.
5. Extend interval between monitoring of blood tests when possible. Eg: stable patients in anticoagulation clinics.
6. Take actions to reduce exposure of “high risk “patients (such as those who are on immune suppressive drugs) to other people in clinics. That could be achieved either by deferring their clinic visits and prescribing and dispensing the required drugs to a healthy person sent on their behalf when appropriate.
7. Timed appointments would help if the contact details of patients are available for the due clinic visits to avoid longer waiting time.
8. Haematology clinics may provide to their patients, telephone numbers for emergency communications related to their haematology problems.

## Haematology laboratories

### **Recommend use of standard PPE and adherence to standard precautions as described by MoH**

1. Follow Standard Precautions when handling clinical specimens.
2. Recommend special attention to hand hygiene.
3. Adhere to good laboratory practice at all times.
4. Use of disposable plastic tubes are preferable to avoid washing tubes, breaking and spillage.
5. Use closed system haematology analysers when available to analyse samples.
6. Follow standard cleaning practices and procedures for decontamination of work surfaces after processing of suspected samples and spillage.
7. Handle all the laboratory waste as per standard practice (including clinical waste/retained samples etc. from Corona suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients).
8. Centrifugation of samples
  - a. All the centrifugation should be carried out only in non-aerosol forming centrifuges if available.
  - b. If laboratories are lacking no aerosol forming ones, recommend re location of aerosol forming centrifuges closer to best ventilated places and keep away from crowded areas.
  - c. Stay away and wait at least 10-15 minutes to open lids of such centrifuges when it is stopped.
  - d. Take care that all the stoppers are properly in place when putting tubes.
  - e. Whenever available, recommend use of safety lids/caps/cups to cover centrifuge buckets (*most of the novel centrifuges provides these as spares and check these in packs un attended*)
  - f. All the spills in a centrifuge should be cleaned immediately and appropriately, using 70% alcohol or 0.5% hypochlorite (non metal parts).

## **References**

1. Willan, J., King, A.J., Hayes, S., Collins, G.P. and Peniket, A. (2020), Care of haematology patients in a COVID-19 epidemic. Br J Haematol. doi:[10.1111/bjh.16620](https://doi.org/10.1111/bjh.16620)
2. Interim Laboratory Biosafety Guidelines for Handling and Processing Specimens Associated with Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/lab/lab-biosafety-guidelines>
3. Interim biosafety guidelines for laboratories. For personnel handling samples or material associated with the 2019-nCoV. Ministry of Health and Indigenous medicine. (February 2020). <http://www.epid.gov.lk>
4. Environmental cleaning guideline to be used during the COVID-19 outbreak. <http://www.epid.gov.lk>