

Background

In April 2020 the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic caused a temporary closure of all UK fertility clinics. We are now able to recommence treatments but we must ensure that we provide a safe service for patients and a safe working environment for Centre staff. Before commencing treatment please read this information carefully. You will then be offered a choice of whether to proceed with or postpone your treatment.

This is still an evolving situation, further disruptions including treatment cancellations and Centre closures are still possible.

Is it safe to have fertility treatment now?

If you or someone in your household is clinically extremely vulnerable and is 'shielding' then you will not be able to proceed with treatment during the pandemic. If you are not 'shielding' but would prefer to defer your treatment until after the pandemic, this option is open to you without any penalty.

As regards to pregnancy, pregnant women do not appear more likely to contract the infection than the general population or to be at higher risk than non-pregnant individuals of severe Covid-19 infection requiring hospital admission. However, pregnancy itself does alter the body's immune system and response to viral infections in general, which can occasionally cause more severe symptoms, particularly towards the end of pregnancy.

There are currently no data suggesting an increased risk of miscarriage or early pregnancy loss in relation to Covid-19 and no evidence that the virus causes birth defects. Some women with Covid-19 have experienced pregnancy complications including preterm birth and preterm prelabour rupture of membranes. Transmission of the virus from a woman to her baby during pregnancy or during labour and delivery is thought to be probable, although the proportion of pregnancies affected and the significance to the baby has yet to be determined.

The risks about the impact of Covid-19 on pregnancy have been considered by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) who are regularly updating their guidance (www.rcog.org.uk). You will need to take this into consideration and actively consent to having treatment whilst there is a risk that you could contract Covid-19 either during the treatment or if successful, during pregnancy.

What is the Centre doing to protect myself and others from Covid-19?

- Screening patients prior to arrival at Centre by telephone questionnaire.
- Screening (by questionnaire and/or temperature) on arrival at Centre.
- Use of alcohol gel /hand washing on arrival and before leaving the Centre.
- Social distancing - ensuring 2 metres distance where possible.
- Reducing number of patients in Centre at any one time.
- Providing personal protective equipment for staff members and ensuring appropriate use at all times.
- Additional cleaning of surfaces within the Centre.
- Cancelling treatment cycles where there is suspicion of Covid-19 infection.
- All staff members will be instructed to avoid unnecessary exposure (both at work and in private) as per current government policies for social distancing.
- If any staff member is at risk of Covid-19 they will be advised isolation/testing as per local policy (as advised by Health Protection Scotland).

What can I do to protect myself and others from Covid-19?

It is very important that you minimise your chance of getting Covid-19 infection prior to and during your treatment.

- Please follow the advice of the Scottish government – see <https://www.gov.scot/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance/>
- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water for 20 seconds.
- Carry a tissue - Need to cough or sneeze? - Use the tissue, discard in a bin and wash your hands as soon as possible. 'CATCH IT, BIN IT, KILL IT'.
- Avoid contact with anyone who has symptoms of coronavirus.
- Avoid non-essential use of public transport when possible.
- Work from home, where possible.
- Avoid large and small gatherings in public spaces as infections spread easily in closed spaces where people gather together.
- Avoid gatherings with friends and family. Keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media.
- Use telephone or online services to contact the Centre, your GP or other essential services.
- Please wear a face covering when attending the Centre as advised by the Scottish Government.

It is important that you attend your appointments with us only at the time that you have been allocated. Please build-in time for travel and parking so that you are not late

What are the symptoms of Covid-19?

The main symptoms of coronavirus are:

- a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature).
- a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual).
- Loss of taste or smell.

Other symptoms include: hoarseness, nasal discharge/congestion, shortness of breath, sore throat, wheezing or sneezing, tiredness, and muscle aches and pains.

What should I do if I or anyone in my household has symptoms of Covid-19?

- Do not attend the Centre in person if you have symptoms of Covid-19 or have been in contact with anyone with symptoms of Covid-19 or who has been diagnosed with Covid-19.
- Do contact the Centre by telephone for advice 01224 553101 option 2.

If you need advice regarding coronavirus symptoms please use the 111 online coronavirus service (<https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19/>).

Is the Centre screening patients for Covid-19?

Yes. All patients will be contacted by telephone in advance of their appointment and requested to answer standard questions but are not routinely tested. To protect you and our staff, we will not be treating any patients with Covid symptoms. We trust that all patients will answer these questions honestly so that we can reduce the risk of transmission of the virus to other patients and staff members.

You must notify the Centre before attending your next appointment if the answer to any of the questions in the screening questionnaire changes.

If my partner, a member of our household or myself, develops symptoms of Covid-19 during treatment, what will happen?

Contact the Centre by telephone for advice before attending any appointments.

If we are unable to proceed with your treatment in a manner that is safe for staff and other patients it would be necessary to cancel your cycle.

What happens if my cycle is cancelled because of risk of infection with Covid-19?

- The cancelled cycle will not count as an NHS funded cycle.
- If self-funding, a further cycle with no additional charge or a full refund will be offered.
- Your treatment cycle will be re-scheduled for the earliest available slot.

Which appointments should my partner attend with me?

To minimise the risk of spreading the virus, it is important to reduce the number of people attending the Centre. Therefore, we have to ask that you attend most of your appointments by yourself. There may be certain circumstances where your partner will be required to attend the Centre. We will notify you in advance which appointments these apply to as they will have to undertake a screening questionnaire the day before the appointment. Unfortunately children will not be permitted.

What support is available to me?

- Our Counsellor is available to undertake video sessions Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday contact aberdeenfertility@abdn.ac.uk or telephone secretarial team 01224 553101 option 2.
- **Fertility Network UK** (fertilitynetworkuk.org) provides free and impartial **support**, advice, information and understanding for anyone affected by fertility issues.
- If you are feeling low or anxious, information and support is available from: Breathing Space <https://www.breathingspace.scot/> , NHS Inform [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Your mental wellbeing | NHS inform](#) and SAMH [coronavirus and your mental wellbeing](#)

Where can I get further information?

<https://www.gov.scot/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance/>

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19>

<https://www.hfea.gov.uk/treatments/covid-19-and-fertility-treatment/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-patients/frequently-asked-questions-for-patients-on-coronavirus-covid-19/>

<https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/guidelines-research-services/coronavirus-covid-19-pregnancy-and-womens-health/>

<https://www.britishfertilitysociety.org.uk/2020/05/01/position-statement-on-the-resumption-of-fertility-treatment-in-the-uk-during-covid-19-pandemic/>