Recommendations on returning to school or day care for children with rheumatic diseases

We understand that this is a very stressful time for everyone, particularly for parents with children who have rheumatic disease. There is still a lot that we don’t know about COVID-19, and we continue to learn more daily. From what we know, however, most children who get sick from this virus have mild symptoms.

If you do not feel comfortable sending your child to school or day care after reading this, you should keep your child at home. We also realize that not everyone is in a situation that enables one parent to stay home with children. In these situations, where children with rheumatic disease do return to school, good hygiene including social distancing and frequent, effective hand washing for 20 seconds with soap and water are essential.

To simplify matters, we would like to make recommendations based on the most common medications taken by the patients we follow.

Children being treated with the following medications should not return to school:

- Any biologic agent: Etanercept (Enbrel, Erelzi), Adalimumab (Humira), Infliximab (Remicade), Abatacept (Orenda), Tocilizumab (Actemra), Anakinra (Kineret), Canakinumab (Ilaris), Rituximab (Rituxan), Tofacitinib (Xeljanz), Belimumab (Benlysta);
- Prednisone or prednisolone (by mouth or intravenous);
- Immunosuppressive medication: MMF (Cellcept, Myfortic, mycophenolate mofetil), Azathioprine (Imuran), Tacrolimus (Prograf, Advagraf), Sirolimus (Rapamune, rapamycin), Cyclosporine (Neoral, Gengraf), Cyclophosphamide (Cytoxan).

If possible, we recommend that the siblings of children taking the medications listed above also not return to school this academic year. If this is not possible, precautions should be taken to protect the immune-compromised child, like ensuring good hand washing, and not sharing food or drinks.

Children being treated with the following medications may consider returning to school:

- Methotrexate;
- Sulfasalazine (Azulfidine);
- Leflunomide (Arava).

Children with rheumatic diseases on the following medications or on no medications can return to school:

- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications:
- Naproxen (Anaprox, Aleve, Naproxen, Naprosyn);
• Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) Indomethacin (Indocid);
• Diclofenac sodium (Voltaren);
• Celecoxib (Celebrex);
• Aspirin;
• Colchicine (Colcrys, Mitigare).

At all times, anyone out in the public needs to practice social distancing and frequent effective hand washing. Once returning home, effective hand washing is required. In some cases, showering and changing clothes should be considered.

**If you, your child or a healthy sibling has any symptoms suggestive of COVID-19, your children should NOT go to school** (these symptoms include fever, cough, stuffy nose, runny nose, sore throat, headaches with muscle aches, vomiting or diarrhea). We recommend that you call the toll-free number (1-877-644-4545) for guidance if these symptoms develop.

Should you have any questions about the information contained in this document, please contact us at 514-412-4400 ext. 22621.

**Links of interest:**