

Patient information - Covid-19

IVF London clinic aims to provide a safe service to patients and a safe working environment for its staff. Our processes follow government and HFEA guidelines on social distancing measures, use of PPE, provision of COVID-19 tests and providing counselling and emotional support to our patients.

Further information can be found on the [FAQs on the HFEA website](#)

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a new illness that affects the lungs and breathing. The virus appears to have originated in Hubei province in China towards the end of 2019. Within Europe, Italy, Spain and UK are the countries currently most affected. The total number of confirmed cases in the UK is published by the Department of Health and Social Care, and is accessible to everyone online.

Most cases of COVID-19 globally have evidence of human to human transmission. There are two routes by which COVID-19 can be spread. The first is directly through close contact with an infected person (within 2 metres) where respiratory droplets can enter the eyes, mouth, nose or airways. This risk increases the longer someone has close contact with an infected person who has symptoms. The second route is indirectly via the touching of a surface, object or the hand of an infected person contaminated with respiratory secretions and subsequently touching one's own mouth, nose or eyes.

What should I expect when I make contact with the clinic?

1. Before you can book an appointment with your Consultant, you and your partner will be required to complete a triage questionnaire, consent forms and a Code of Conduct.
2. The appointment may be virtual or face to face.
3. At the initial consultation, your Consultant will determine if it is safe for you to commence treatment, based on your medical history and triage assessment.
4. Treatment may commence 2 weeks after your initial consultation.
5. We will require you both to sign consent forms before treatment starts.
6. The triage questionnaire will be completed again for both the patient and partner at start of treatment stimulation.
7. COVID-19 testing will be performed for you both. We will provide further detail at consultation.
8. You will have to pay for all tests for yourself and your partner. Itemised costs will be provided.

Initial consultations:

Can I have a virtual consultation (telemedicine)?

If you have access to the internet and a computer or phone, IVF London clinic may ask you to have a virtual health care visit via skype. They will talk with you about how this works. You may be asked to download a video calling app or use one that you already have, such as Skype or WhatsApp. In some instances, just a phone call may be used.

What will happen if I need a face to face appointment?

If you are attending for face-to-face appointment, care will be taken to stagger appointment times between patients to prevent large groups of people congregating in the waiting area.

Sometimes we may call you ahead of your appointment to ask for any updates about COVID-19 symptoms or to move your appointment.

All staff, patients and their partner and visitors to IVF London are required to use the Alcohol gel which is provided just inside the Clinic entrance, as soon as you enter. Handwashing facilities are accessible at request. These measures are effective at reducing the spread of Covid-19 infection.

To maintain social distancing measures during the current Covid-19 pandemic, we offer virtual consultations as a preference.

Following the consultation, all patients be offered a choice of whether to proceed with or postpone their treatment.

How do I advise I travel to my appointment?

Only use public transport if you have to. When travelling by public transport:

1. avoid rush hours and busy times if you can
2. cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the bin
3. stay 2 metres away from people who are not from your household
4. wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
5. if soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser

Do not use public transport if:

1. you have [symptoms of coronavirus](#) – a new, continuous cough or a high temperature
2. you or any of your household are [self-isolating](#)

Keep up to date about reduced services and closed stations.

Can I bring my partner or children with me to a clinic visit?

Clinic visits will be limited to the patient receiving treatment to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Children are not permitted to accompany or attend any clinic appointments.

What precautions is IVF London taking to prevent the spread of Covid-19?

All our nursing, clinical and laboratory staff will be wearing appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for all your appointments. They are required to report any exposure to risk and self-isolate as appropriate.

Except for wearing a face mask, we do not expect patients to be wearing full PPE.

Will IVF London be testing me for Covid-19 and how will my results be managed?

Yes, IVF London will be testing.

All patients and partners are required to test for Covid-19. If either one or both of you test positive, then your treatment will be cancelled or postponed until you have both recovered.

Before re-commencing treatment, you will require further testing and follow up. If you have recovered from a previous confirmed COVID-19 infection you will be required to present medical evidence of clearance in order to be eligible for treatment. If you have been on respiratory support during the COVID-19 infection episode, you should additionally provide evidence of assessment and a medical specialist report.

You can have your PCR testing done via NHS but we will need results emailed to us. We will not accept text message results.

[Information about getting tested for COVID-19](#) on GOV.UK

What guidance do I follow if I am donating gametes?

You must not donate if:

1. Less than 28 days from return from a Coronavirus risk area. This includes transit through an airport in a Coronavirus risk area, even if the traveller has not left the airport.
2. Less than 28 days from the last contact with a person with Coronavirus infection.
3. Less than 28 days since recovery from Coronavirus infection or possible Coronavirus infection.

What to do if you feel unwell?

Stay at home if you have either:

- a high temperature – you feel hot to touch on your chest or back
- a new, continuous cough – this means you've started coughing repeatedly

Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital.

You do not need to contact 111 to tell them you're staying at home.

Testing for coronavirus is not needed if you're staying at home.

How long should you stay at home?

- if you have symptoms, stay at home for 7 days
- if you live with other people, they should stay at home for 14 days from the day the first person got symptoms

If you live with someone who is 70 or over, has a long-term condition, is pregnant or has a weakened immune system, try to find somewhere else for them to stay for 14 days.

If you have to stay at home together, try to keep away from each other as much as possible.

Read the NHS advice about staying at home.

Use the NHS 111 online coronavirus service if:

- you feel you cannot cope with your symptoms at home
- your condition gets worse
- your symptoms do not get better after 7 days

You can find the NHS 111 coronavirus online service here: <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19/>

Only call 111 if you cannot get help online.

For full details on how to stay safe and avoid catching and spreading coronavirus visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): latest information and advice](#) on GOV.UK
- [Information about the virus and how to protect yourself](#) on NHS.UK

Will my pregnancy be affected by Covid-19?

Generally, pregnant women do not appear to be more likely to be seriously unwell compared to other healthy adults if they develop coronavirus. However, it should be noted that there is increased risk of infection during pregnancy.

It is expected the large majority of pregnant women will experience only mild or moderate cold/flu like symptoms. Cough, fever, shortness of breath, headache and loss of sense of smell are other relevant symptoms.

However, the advice on pregnancy is changing rapidly. Your best source of advice is The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. The link to their guidance can be found here:

<https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/guidelines-research-services/guidelines/coronavirus-pregnancy/covid-19-virus-infection-and-pregnancy/#general>

Patients need to be aware that NHS services such as Early Pregnancy Assessment Units may have different policies during Covid-19.

Is it safe to get the COVID-19 vaccine if I am currently, or planning, to have fertility treatment?

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) have recently updated their guidance on priority groups for COVID-19 vaccinations, which includes a section on pregnancy and those trying to become pregnant. JCVI advises that, for women who are offered vaccination with the Pfizer-BioNTech or AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines, vaccination in pregnancy should be considered where the risk of exposure to COVID-19 infection is high and cannot be avoided, or where the woman has underlying conditions that put them at very high risk of serious complications of COVID-19. In these circumstances, clinicians should discuss the risks and benefits of vaccination with the woman, who should be told about the absence of safety data for the vaccine in pregnant women.

JCVI does not advise routine pregnancy testing before receipt of a COVID-19 vaccine. Those who are trying to become pregnant do not need to avoid pregnancy after vaccination.

Is it safe to get the COVID-19 vaccine?

The COVID-19 vaccine is a new type of vaccine that has been shown to be effective and to have a good safety profile. It has not yet been assessed in pregnancy so the government, through the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), have advised that until more information is available, those who are pregnant should not have this vaccine.

However, if you are at very high risk of catching the infection or have a clinical conditions that put you at high risk of suffering serious complications from COVID-19, then you may consider getting vaccinated.

Here are the key points you should consider:

- if you are pregnant you should not be vaccinated unless you are at high risk – you can be vaccinated after your pregnancy is over
- if you have had the first dose and then become pregnant you should delay the second dose until after the pregnancy is over (unless you are at high risk)

If you are pregnant but think you are at high risk, you should discuss having or completing vaccination with your doctor or nurse.

Although the vaccine has not been tested in pregnancy, you may decide that the known risks from COVID-19 are so clear that you wish to go ahead with vaccination. There is no advice to avoid pregnancy after COVID-19 vaccination.

If you would like more information please see the links below:

<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.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-women-of-childbearing-age-currently-pregnant-planning-a-pregnancy-or-breastfeeding/covid-19-vaccination-a-guide-for-women-of-childbearing-age-pregnant-planning-a-pregnancy-or-breastfeeding>

<https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/news/covid-19-vaccination-and-pregnancy/>

What Counselling and Support can I receive during my treatment?

You are not alone in your fertility journey. At IVF London, we offer various types of support as we recognise the value the additional support brings. Counselling is a key part of the journey at any stage of the treatment. Our specialist Counsellors and Coaches are on hand to support you on this journey. Other support groups are available, including Fertility Network UK, IVF Babble, Surrogacy UK to mention a few.

Please speak to a member of staff if you would like to discuss any element of this information further or if you need more information visit

<https://www.hfea.gov.uk/treatments/covid-19-and-fertility-treatment/>.

