

COVID: High-risk Conditions

There are conditions with high enough risk of severe COVID to warrant workplace accommodation, beyond routine precautions (mask wearing, physical distancing, hand washing).

1. **Pregnancy:** Patients with complications of pregnancy such as diabetes, preeclampsia, anemia, advanced maternal age, and obesity require work from home (Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada). Of note: “Current data do not suggest an increased risk of severe disease from COVID-19 in healthy pregnant women compared to non-pregnant reproductive-aged women.”
2. **Asthma:** “Patients with mild-moderate asthma should work from home if feasible. Patients with severe asthma should also work from home if feasible and, if not feasible, should remain off work for medical reasons until such time as the WHO or local public health authorities declare that physical distancing is no longer necessary” (Canadian Thoracic Society, “Physician Distancing for Asthma Patients” section).
3. **COPD:** “Patients should stay at home as much as possible, including working from home if feasible” (Canadian Thoracic Society).
4. **Diabetes:** There is no specific guidance on workplace accommodation from Diabetes Canada – but expert opinion suggests taking into consideration other risks such as age >40 and other co-morbidities as work accommodation is considered.
5. **Cardiovascular disease:** There is no specific guidance on workplace accommodation from Heart and Stroke, although that organization suggests people who have a heart condition or vascular disease, or who have had a stroke, should stay at home as much as possible to minimize risk of exposure.
6. **Cancer:** There is no specific guidance on workplace accommodation from the Canadian Cancer Society – but expert opinion suggests those in active treatment (chemo, radiation, immunotherapy, recovering from surgery) stay home as much as possible to minimize the risk of exposure, and practise physical distancing when needing to go out. This would likely preclude in-person work.
7. **Inflammatory Bowel Disease:** The guidance is to work from home or to school at home if new diagnosis, severe active inflammation, malnutrition, prednisone >20 mg per day (Crohn’s and Colitis Canada).
8. **Patients on immunosuppressants:** For all transplant recipients taking immunosuppressants, as well as patients on chronic prednisone >20 mg per day, it is likely best that they avoid a workplace setting. • BC Transplant has provided the following guidance: “As a transplant recipient who is immunocompromised, you may be at higher risk of significant complications from COVID-19. As per public health orders, employers are expected to have policies in place to support physical distancing and prevent the spread of this virus. We strongly recommend discussing with your employer options for teleworking, flexible hours, staggered start times and use of email/teleconferencing or, where these options are not possible, potentially a leave from work.” • Note: DMARDS do NOT appear to be associated with increased risk of serious COVID-19 related disease (Crohn’s and Colitis Canada). Patients should discuss with their rheumatologist the extent to which their medications increase their risk and the degree of risk of transmission based on their job duties (Arthritis Research Canada).

9. **Age:** COVID-19 risk related to age Based on what we know so far, adults 60+ and particularly those with underlying medical conditions are considered at increased risk of serious illness should they contract COVID-19 (Public Health Ontario). Work accommodations should take into account age and disease-related risks.