

Avoid infection

Biological therapy can suppress your immune system and make you more prone to infection. Some infections can cause severe illness and can be difficult to treat if on biologic therapy.

If you become unwell with a productive cough, fever or other signs of an infection, please be assessed by your GP. You may need a course of antibiotics to treat the infection.

To prevent infection:

- Wash your hands or use alcohol hand gel regularly, especially before eating and after using the toilet.
- Avoid foods such as raw meats or foods that have not been properly prepared to reduce your risk of gastrointestinal infection.
- Avoid close contact with people with gastroenteritis or respiratory infections.



If you feel unwell or have an IBD flare

A flare is when your IBD symptoms are worse than usual. You may also have a fever, severe abdominal pain with bloating, severe nausea and vomiting, increased bloody diarrhoea or mucous in the stool.

You may need to be assessed by your doctor in the IBD outpatient clinic or in hospital. *If you become unwell, please contact your gastroenterologist or IBD Nurse:*

IBD Helpline (03) 9288 3592

Email: tamie.samyue@svhm.org.au

Private patients can contact their gastroenterologist's rooms directly.

For urgent matters outside of business hours, please contact the *St Vincent's Hospital Switchboard* on **(03) 9288 2211** and ask to speak to the Gastroenterologist on call.



**ST VINCENT'S
HOSPITAL**
MELBOURNE

Staying healthy on Biological Therapy

Biological therapy with Infliximab or Humira is a treatment that reduces symptoms of Crohn's Disease and helps to achieve remission.

It is important to establish a good relationship with your local GP. Together with your gastroenterologist, your GP can help monitor your health. *See your GP for issues such as:*

- ✓ Medication scripts (except biologic therapy)
- ✓ Blood monitoring and pathology request slips
- ✓ Sick certificates
- ✓ Family planning and sexual health

Routine Follow Up

By attending regular IBD clinic appointments your gastroenterologist and IBD nurse can monitor your health to reduce the chance of a flare and to ensure you are getting an appropriate treatment for your condition.

Medication Compliance

It is very important that you take your biologic therapy as prescribed. If you need help to improve your medication compliance, speak to your IBD nurse for advice on (03) 9288 3592.

Quit Smoking

Smoking makes Crohn's disease worse. Smoking reduces the effect of biologic therapy and increases your risk of having a flare or complications after surgery.

Quit today! Support is available. Your IBD nurse can help you find the right support or call:

QUIT Victoria
13 78 48.



Vaccinations

Vaccinations are an important way to prevent illness. Annual influenza vaccination and a course of Hepatitis B and pneumococcal vaccination are also recommended. If you are planning overseas travel, you may need additional vaccinations. See your GP or a travel clinic for advice.

Diet



Maintaining a healthy diet reduces the risk of illness and complications from infection or surgery. Malnutrition and weight loss are common issues in IBD.

Some people with IBD may benefit from dietary supplements or a specialised diet. A dietician can give advice to help maintain a healthy diet and improve bowel function.



Exercise

It's important to stay active and exercise regularly, but only do as much as you can tolerate. Exercise helps relieve stress and prevent depression and anxiety.

Mental Health

Stress, anxiety and depression can affect the symptoms and severity of IBD. There are many ways to help deal with stress and anxiety.

Psychological support is available. Talk to your gastroenterologist or IBD nurse for more advice. At St Vincent's Hospital, IBD patients can access the IBD counselling service.

Women's Health

Women who have IBD and take immune suppressing medication are at higher risk of having an abnormal pap smear. Abnormalities can be detected and treated early with regular pap smears. Pap smears can be arranged at your local GP clinic.

Family planning should be discussed with your GP or gastroenterologist before you start on biologic therapy. If you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant, please discuss treatment options with your gastroenterologist.

