



COVID 19 Pandemic & Disease Modifying Drugs

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The COVID-19 pandemic has changed many things for all of us, especially those with serious autoimmune conditions, many of whom are asking if they should stop disease-modifying drug treatments because of the virus. Those newly diagnosed with a serious autoimmune condition—for whom disease-modifying drugs have increased risk of infection as a potential side effect—are asking if taking those drugs will increase their risk of severe pneumonia and cytokine storm that can come with COVID-19. In this article I will review the factors to consider if you are currently taking disease-modifying drug treatments and what to consider if you are newly diagnosed with a serious autoimmune condition. I will also suggest steps everyone who has a serious autoimmune condition should take right now, as we face the COVID 19 pandemic.

- What if I was just diagnosed with a serious autoimmune condition and have not yet started a disease-modifying medication?

The answer to this question depends on the severity of your current disease symptoms. You may need to take steroids to treat an acute relapse or severe underlying symptoms. Then your medical team should assess the severity of current symptoms, labs, and imaging results to understand how urgently you should begin disease-modifying drugs and how potent those drugs should be. More neurologists and autoimmune specialists are telling all of their newly diagnosed patients that improving diet quality and health behaviors are a top priority for managing their disease. Regardless of whether disease-modifying drug treatments are prescribed, everyone with autoimmune conditions will have a much better outcome if they adopt health-promoting diet and lifestyle choices as a key part of their treatment and wellness plan. My advice is to begin the Wahls Protocol® immediately. Ask your medical team if it is safe to follow up every three months and wait to assess if your symptoms and disease activity can be managed with diet and lifestyle changes or if medication is needed. During this pandemic, more specialists and more patients are willing to use an aggressive diet and lifestyle approach to wellness, such as the Wahls Protocol®, and delay or avoid immune-