



Protecting smokers from COVID-19

In light of the rapid spread of COVID-19 the NC SCT is recommending that face-to-face stop smoking consultations cease immediately.

It is still vitally important that we help smokers to quit because smoking harms the immune system and smokers are therefore less protected against infections like coronavirus.

Smokers are therefore at greater risk of:

- getting acute respiratory infections
- infections lasting longer
- infections being more serious than it would be for someone who does not smoke

We recommend that **behavioural support continues to be provided via telephone** (or Skype/Facetime to maintain face-to-face contact where possible) and we will look at producing some resources to support this. For now you can continue to deliver the Standard Treatment Programme over the telephone: www.ncsct.co.uk/publication_ncsct-standard-treatment-programme.php

Carbon monoxide (CO) monitoring will need to be paused for the time being and smoking status will become 'self-reported' and not 'CO-verified'.

We need to make sure our clients continue to receive stop smoking medications and we will need to be adaptable to make sure that this happens. For example: Posting medication or vouchers to clients if you offer direct supply or a voucher scheme or sending letters of medication recommendation for GPs and community pharmacists direct to the patient with a copy for the relevant health professionals.

Pregnant smokers may still be being seen as part of their antenatal care and care should be taken to minimise the infection risk – **CO monitoring will also be paused for this group** until a time when the risk is considered sufficiently reduced. The Standard Treatment Programme for pregnant women can still be used, minus CO monitoring: www.ncsct.co.uk/publication_ncsct_stp_pw.php

We have a vital role to play in preventing the spread of COVID-19 to smokers, and in helping smokers become and remain smokefree so that they are less at risk of serious health consequences from the virus.

We will revise this recommendation as guidance from PHE and NHSE is published.

Dr Andy McEwen

Chief Executive, NC SCT