IMMUNODEFICIENCY DURING COVID-19
What does “immunodeficiency” mean?

Immunodeficiency is the suppression or weakening of a person’s immune system, either from disease or from medicines used to combat other medical conditions. Their immune system is no longer able to fight off illnesses with the same capacity, therefore causing them to be more susceptible to both dangerous and normally non-threatening diseases.
Diseases and Medical Conditions that cause Immunodeficiency
- HIV
- Genetic Immune Deficiencies
- Organ Transplants
- Bone Marrow Transplants
- Cancer
- Diabetes

Diseases that require immunosuppressants for treatment:
- Cancer (Chemotherapy)
- Lupus
- Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Inflammatory Bowel Diseases (such as Ulcerative Colitis and Crohn’s Disease)

People with an immunodeficiency are usually referred to as “immunocompromised” or “immunosuppressed”
Immunocompromised People in Day to Day Life

According to a report published by the Open Forum for Infectious Diseases, 2.7% of the US population is Immunocompromised.

Immunodeficiency looks different for each and every person who suffers from it. The severity and duration differs depending on the medical condition or medicine in question.
For some, the symptoms of immunodeficiency can be mild.

But for others, this deficiency can be very severe. Even the common cold can become a serious health risk, and a weakened immune system can also lead to a longer infection time. They have to take extra precautions against germs throughout day-to-day life.
Current studies show that those with already weakened immune systems are at a higher risk for developing severe symptoms from COVID-19. They are also more likely to remain sick and infectious for longer than others.

Even people with medical conditions that only slightly lower immune response, such as diabetes and high blood pressure, are at higher risk.
Immunocompromised people who can afford to have been Social Distancing and staying inside since before stay-at-home orders were put into place. However, not everyone can afford to do that.

Along with this, some immunocompromised people are unable to get vaccinated. This means that when a vaccine is created, they will have to rely on enough other people getting the vaccine in order to be safe.
HOW TO HELP IMMUNOSUPPRESSED PEOPLE DURING THE COVID-19 EPIDEMIC

Try to check in with people in your community who are immunosuppressed. See if they need help getting groceries, need other supplies, or just need someone to talk to right now.
The best thing you can do for immunocompromised people is to follow the CDC’s recommendations

- Wear a face mask in public
- Frequently wash or sanitize your hands
- Practice social distancing
- Don’t leave your house unless it’s necessary

Furthermore, be aware of changing laws in your area right now. As stay-at-home orders are lifted, some immunocompromised people may be required to work in public, despite it not being safe for them yet.
For more information:

- CDC Coronavirus Information
- Very Well Health What it means to be Immunocompromised
  https://www.verywell-health.com/what-it-means-to-be-immunocompromised-have-immune-deficiency-3132870
- Health What is immunocompromised
  https://www.health.com/condition/infectious-diseases/what-is-immunocompromised
- Oxford Academic Open Forum Infectious Diseases
  https://academic.oup.com/ofid/article/3/suppl_1/1439/2635779