

How to cope mentally during the Coronavirus pandemic

DR GOLAM NABI

Everyone reacts differently to difficult situations, and it is normal to feel stress and worry during a crisis. But multiple challenges daily, such as the effects of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic can push you beyond your ability to cope with the situation.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, you may experience stress, anxiety, fear, sadness and loneliness. Mental health disorders, including anxiety and depression, can worsen. Worries and anxiety about COVID-19 and its impact can be overwhelming. Social distancing makes it even more challenging. Let us see how to overcome these problems.

Go to bed and get up at the same time each day. Stick close to your typical schedule, even if you are staying at home.

Regular physical activities and exercise can help reduce anxiety and improve your mood. Find an activity that includes movement, such as freehand exercise and walking in a room or on the roof.

Choose a well-balanced diet. Eat plenty of vegetables, fruits and protein-rich diet which will help you to boost your immunity.



Avoid loading up on junk food and refined sugar. Limit caffeine as it can aggravate stress and anxiety.

If you smoke you are already at higher risk of lung disease. Because COVID-19 affects the lungs, your risk increases even more. So this is the best time to

quit smoking.

Set aside time for yourself. Even a few minutes of quiet time can be refreshing and help to quiet your mind and reduce anxiety. Many people benefit from practices such as deep breathing, yoga or meditation. Listen to music, or read books —

whatever helps you to relax.

Constant news about COVID-19 from all types of media can heighten fear and stress about the disease. Limit social media that may expose you to rumours and false information. Also limit reading, hearing or watching other news,

but keep up to date on national and local recommendations.

A distraction can get you away from the cycle of negative thoughts that feed anxiety and depression. Enjoy hobbies that you can do at home, identify a new project or clean out that closet you promised you would get to. Doing something positive to manage anxiety is a healthy coping strategy.

Do not become overwhelmed by creating a life-changing list of things to achieve while you are at home. Set reasonable goals each day and outline steps you can take to reach those goals. Give yourself credit for every step in the right direction, no matter how small and recognise that some days will be better than others.

If you need to stay at home and distance yourself from others, avoid social isolation. Find time each day to make virtual connections by phone, email, text messaging etc. Enjoy virtual socialising and talking to those at your home.

Keep yourself healthy and stress-free during the transition period, it will all be over soon.

The writer is an Associate Professor of Medicine at Z H Sikder Women's Medical College and Hospital, Dhaka.

PREGNANCY & COVID-19

Coronavirus infection in pregnancy

PROF M KARIM KHAN

Coronavirus can affect anyone, but in pregnancy, it may create anxiety and panic to the expectant mother and her family members. Fortunately, there is no EXTRA risk for expectant mothers. The risk is equal or less than others. But as it is a new virus, further information is needed to make any conclusive remarks.

Usually, it does not cross the placenta, so vertical transmission is not seen. A newborn in China was affected but it was not sure whether it was a vertical transmission or contacted during or following delivery. Coronavirus infection in pregnant mother does not affect the weight of the baby. Only in two cases, the baby was born prematurely with low birth weight, cause of which could not be ascertained. It probably was not related to coronavirus infection.

Prevention is better than cure. So it is better for everyone not to go outside, using a mask if you must go out, washing hands frequently, avoid touching the nose and face without cleaning hands, drink lukewarm water, consume fresh vegetables and fruits, exercise, stay at home and pass a worry-free time. The expectant mothers should take the usual precautions rather than being anxious or panicked.

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COVID-19 obstetric practice recommendations

Clinical recommendations about COVID-19 are quickly developing. The following guidance for obstetric providers supplements Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations.

- Pregnant women should be regularly screened for symptoms consistent with an upper respiratory infection; any symptom should result in testing of a nasopharyngeal swab for COVID-19.

- All women scheduled for induction or caesarean delivery and their support person should be screened for symptoms of COVID-19 24 to 48 hours before arrival at the hospital and rescreened prior to entry to labour and delivery. If the woman screens positive, induction and caesarean should be rescheduled if possible.

- All hospitalised women and their support person should be screened for symptoms daily. If the pregnant woman screens positive for symptoms, she should have a nucleic acid test for COVID-19; and if the support person screens positive, s/he should be sent home. If the nucleic acid tests were sufficiently available, the support person with symptoms of a viral upper respiratory infection would have such testing.

- For pregnant women with COVID-19, Betamethasone administration should be limited to those at high risk for preterm delivery within 7 days and only given between 23 weeks' and 33 weeks and 6 days' gestation. Women at risk for preterm delivery at 34 weeks to 36 weeks and 6 days should not receive Betamethasone.

- If cervical ripening is required, outpatient regimens should be prioritised.

- One support person, appropriately masked, should be permitted at the hospital.

- Neuraxial anaesthesia is an optimal approach to labour anaesthesia. Nitrous oxide should not be used because it might cause aerosolisation of respiratory secretions.

- Labour management and timing of delivery need not be altered during the pandemic. However, pregnant women with moderate or severe COVID-19 that is not improving may experience modest respiratory improvement if they are delivered preterm.

- Healthcare workers who are pregnant should stop face-to-face contact with patients after 36 weeks' gestation.

HEALTH bulletin



WHO issues criteria to lift the COVID-19 lockdowns

Countries should evaluate and meet six criteria before they lift shelter-in-place restrictions for the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19). World Health Organisation (WHO) officials said.

Decisions should be based on "protecting human health" and the scientific knowledge about how the Coronavirus is transmitted, said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the WHO Director General. He outlined six criteria to lift restrictions:

1. Transmission is controlled.
 2. Health system capacity is in place to detect, test, isolate, and treat every case and trace every contact.
 3. Outbreak risks are minimised in special settings, such as nursing homes.
 4. Preventive measures are in place in workplaces, schools, and essential businesses.
 5. The risk of people bringing the virus in from other countries is managed.
 6. Communities are fully educated, engaged, and empowered to adjust to the new normal.
- Countries should put in place comprehensive measures to slow transmission. The risk of additional outbreaks remains high due to global connectivity.
- Michael Ryan, Executive Director of the WHO Health Emergencies Programme said, "Lockdowns must be replaced with some type of strategy, which will change behaviours for the foreseeable future". In the meantime, countries must increase efforts to test, quarantine, treat, and trace the virus.

Understanding the challenges of COVID-19

DR JUBAYER RAHMAN

The outbreak of Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) started in Wuhan city of China at the end of 2019 but it is travelling around the globe, infecting countries, one after another, and arresting people at the individual level. Initial assessment of COVID-19 regarding the transmission and potency was very sloppy. Though often information was released from China, it really could not convince people outside China about the nature of this pathogen. As a result, significant delays observed in taking necessary steps in countries other than China against COVID-19. When it turned to be a monster, it was late for many countries to protect the people.

Globally, experts could not predict how contagious COVID-19 might be and what population would be the most vulnerable. Amidst all of these confusions, COVID-19 has been very successful to establish as a pandemic for the world. COVID-19 has been very successful and part of the reason is that experts initially thought asymptomatic individuals are not posing the risk of spreading infection. This finally came up as a big mistake where more than 20% of cases could be asymptomatic and can spread infection.

Initial diagnosis of COVID-19 infection is done by mouth/nasal swabs based on a PCR test to detect the presence of viral RNA. Unfortunately, this method is very expensive and requires

biosafety level 3 to prepare samples. Under this circumstance, most countries failed to perform early diagnosis and when they performed, it was restricted to only symptomatic individuals. Though positive individuals were isolated, asymptomatic individuals kept spreading infection. This was the major turning point to make this infection into a global pandemic and resulted in the formation of lots of epicentres.

COVID-19 infection around the world is a huge challenge. The most effective strategy to contain this infection is home quarantine. Home quarantine or 'shelter in place' regardless of the status of any individual either infected or not should set their mind and exercise immediately. Any government that

has not started to instruct people, individuals must do it on their own will. This must be for 3 weeks or longer if not doing simultaneously.

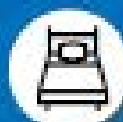
Bangladesh is already experiencing COVID-19 wave and passed the initial phase. At this point forward, it is extremely important to follow 'staying at home' order without a second thought. Any deviation will likely result in the formation of a COVID-19 epicentre, which means likely to see the human cluster of infection in places around the country. If that happens it would be just out of control, same as any country around the world.

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HOW TO HOME QUARANTINE

The home quarantined person should:



Stay in a well-ventilated single-room preferably with an attached toilet



Needs to stay away from elderly people, pregnant women, children



Restrict his/her movement within the house



Under no circumstances attend any social/religious gathering



Wash hand frequently with soap and water or with alcohol-based sanitizer



Avoid sharing household items like dishes, glasses, cups, utensils, towels, bedding



Wear a surgical mask at all time. The mask should be changed every 8-8 hours

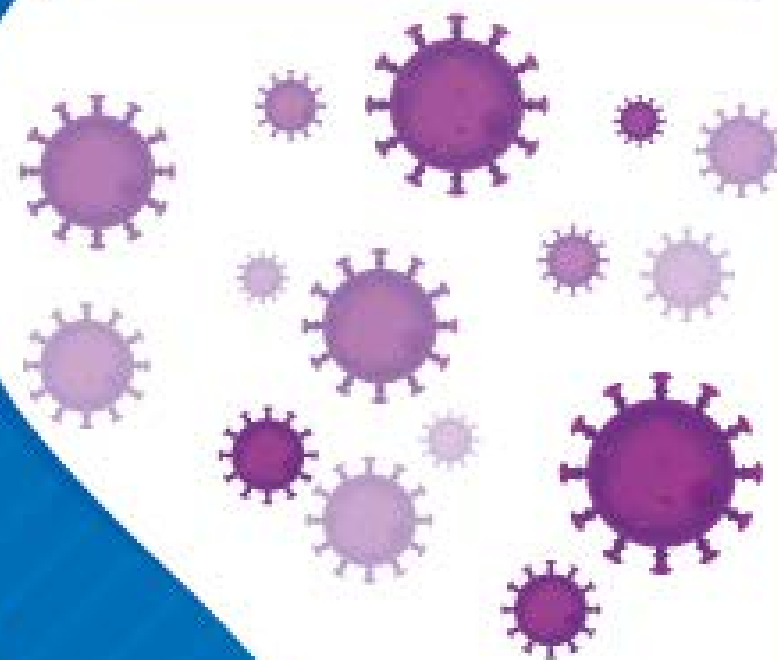


Dispose off used mask in a closed bin and bin should also be handled responsibly



If symptoms appear, he/she should immediately inform the nearest health centre

COVID-19 OUTBREAK



In Search of Excellence

