

# Violence against women during COVID-19

STAR HEALTH DESK

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, a dramatic increase has been reported in recorded cases of violence against women and domestic violence worldwide. Here are some key information about what you can do during to prevent and address violence against women during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Home is not a safe place for me. What can I do?

If you are experiencing violence, it may be helpful to reach out to family, friends and neighbours, to seek support from a hotline or, if safe, from online service for survivors of violence. Find out if local services (e.g. shelters, counselling) are open and reach out to them if available. Make a safety plan in case the violence against you or your children escalates. This includes:

- Identifying a neighbour, friend, relative, colleague, or shelter to go to in case you need to leave the house immediately for safety.
- Have a plan for how you will exit the house safely and how you will reach there (e.g. transport).
- Keep a few essential items (e.g. identification documents, phone, money, medicines, and clothes) available, and emergency phone numbers.
- If possible, develop a code with a trusted neighbour so they can come to your aid in case of an emergency.



## I need medical attention because of violence. Who can help me and where should I go?

If you need urgent medical attention, call for an ambulance or contact your country's emergency health services. If you need any other support, contact a specialised service if available or a health provider.

## I am safe, but I am suffering from mental/sexual/social/long-term physical health problems because of violence. Is there anyone who can help me during COVID-19?

As much as possible, reduce sources of stress:

- Maintain contact with and seek support from family and friends via phone, email, text, etc.
- Try to maintain daily routines and make time for physical activity and sleep.

- Use relaxation exercises (e.g. slow breathing, meditation, progressive muscle relaxation etc.) to relieve stressful thoughts and feelings.
- Engage in activities that in the past have helped with managing adversity.
- Seek information about COVID-19 from reliable sources and reduce the time spent consuming news (for example, 1-2 times per day, rather than every hour).

Seek care from a trained health provider for symptoms and conditions including injuries that need medical attention. Due to restrictions on movement, and pressure on health systems, it may be difficult to access healthcare in person at this time. In this case, find out what is available in your locality and seek alternatives, including information and support offered by phone or online.

## I am worried about someone I know. How can I help?

If you know of, or are concerned about, someone in an abusive relationship there are some things you can do:

- Keep regularly in touch with the person to check that they are safe, ensuring that it is safe for them to be in touch with you. Assume that a perpetrator of violence can see, hear and or monitor communications, so find out how best to communicate with the person that you are concerned about. Be discrete in connecting with them when the abuser is present in the home so that they are not placed at risk of additional harm. Check each time, as this may change.
- If someone you know needs urgent help for whatever reason, be prepared to call emergency health services, the police, health centre, or hotline.

Violence – in all its forms – can have an impact on a woman's well-being throughout the rest of her life. This is unacceptable, and the risks of violence that women and their children face during the current COVID-19 crisis cannot be ignored.

When we are able to prevent violence, or to support women survivors of violence, we help to safeguard women's human rights, and promote physical and mental health and well-being for women throughout their lives. This also helps to alleviate pressure on already stretched essential public services, including the health system.

Source: World Health Organisation

## COVID KINDNESS

### Global leaders pledge universal access to new vaccines, tests & treatment

Heads of state and global health leaders made an unprecedented commitment to work together to accelerate the development and production of new vaccines, tests and treatments for COVID-19 and assure equitable access worldwide.

There is an urgent need, while following existing measures to keep people physically distanced and to test and track all contacts of people who test positive, for innovative COVID-19 vaccines, diagnostics and treatments. The challenge is to speed up and harmonise processes to ensure that once products are deemed safe and effective, they can be brought to the billions of people in the world who need them.

So the leaders came together at a virtual event recently, co-hosted by the World Health Organisation (WHO), the President of France, the President of the European Commission, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The event was joined by the UN Secretary General, the African Union Commission Chairperson, the G20 President, heads of state of France, South Africa, Germany, Vietnam, Costa Rica, Italy, Rwanda, Norway, Spain, Malaysia and the UK.

Health leaders from different coalitions committed to come together, guided by a common vision of a planet protected from human suffering and the devastating social and economic consequences of COVID-19, to launch this groundbreaking collaboration.

They pledged to work towards equitable global access based on an unprecedented level of partnership. They agreed to create a strong unified voice, to build on past experience and to be accountable to the world, to communities and to one another.

## HEALTH bulletin



### FDA warns about limits of SARS-CoV-2 antibody tests

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently issued a letter warning healthcare providers about the limits of serological tests to detect SARS-CoV-2 antibodies. The agency is urging clinicians to "not use serological (antibody) tests as the sole basis to diagnose COVID-19 but instead as information about whether a person may have been exposed."

In mid-March, the FDA "provided regulatory flexibility" for test developers, the agency noted, which has resulted in scores of antibody tests quickly hitting the market without the agency's usual review. As of April 18, just four antibody assays had received emergency use authorisation from the FDA.

The agency said it "is not aware of an antibody test that has been validated for diagnosis of SARS-CoV-2 infection." The tests measure IgM or IgG antibodies, but IgM antibodies may not develop at all, and IgG antibodies usually do not develop until later in the disease process. Therefore, using such tests to diagnose COVID-19 will miss infections.

## COVID-19 & gastrointestinal symptoms

STAR HEALTH DESK

A fever, dry cough, and shortness of breath are hallmark signs COVID-19, the illness caused by the new coronavirus. But early research suggests that another common symptom may be often overlooked: stomach upset.

A recent analysis of more than 200 people admitted to hospitals in Hubei, China where the virus SARS-CoV-2 originated, with mild cases of COVID-19 found that almost 1 in 5 had at least one gastrointestinal symptom, such as diarrhoea, vomiting, or belly pain. The problem, including watery stool, was usually not severe. The diarrhoea lasted for an average of 5 days. Nearly 80% also lacked an appetite.

Those symptoms can stem from other common causes, including stomach flu or food poisoning. But if you have COVID-19, gastrointestinal (GI) problems may slow your recovery. And the digestive symptoms may worsen as you get sicker.

Once any virus infects your body, it can destroy healthy cells and make multiple copies of itself. COVID-19 mainly attacks the cells lining your airways. This makes it hard for you to breathe and can lead to pneumonia. But researchers think the illness also may harm your digestive tract and liver tissue.

Those with digestive symptoms were more likely to have a positive stool test for the coronavirus, which means they had SARS-CoV-2 RNA



### Is Diarrhea a Symptom of COVID-19? New Study Says Digestive Issues May Be Common With Coronavirus

in their poop. It also took them longer to clear the virus from their bodies, compared to those without gastrointestinal symptoms.

**What you should do**  
If you have diarrhoea, nausea, or vomiting, does not mean that you have COVID-19. But it is wise to pay extra attention to your symptoms during this pandemic, especially if you have a health condition that raises your chances for an infection or if you live in an area where the new coronavirus is widespread.

**Stay home.** Most people who test positive for the coronavirus get mildly sick and get better without treatment. Avoid going out unless you must, such as for urgent medical visits.

**Have a "sick" bedroom and bathroom.** If you can, use a separate bathroom for yourself if you live with others to prevent spreading illness through your poop.

**Wash your hands often.** Soap and water for at least 20 seconds is best, especially after you use the bathroom, blow your nose, or

sneeze, and before eating or cooking. Next best is a hand sanitiser with at least 60% alcohol.

**Clean and disinfect surfaces regularly.** This includes the toilet seat and flush handle, bathroom doorknobs, phones, counters, and other things you touch often.

**Drink lots of fluids.** If you have diarrhoea or are vomiting, it is important to replace the lost fluids. An oral rehydration solution from the drugstore is best as it has salt and sugar that your body loses in diarrhoea.

**Eat a bland diet.** Try foods like bananas, white rice and toast, which can help limit your urge to poop and replenish carbohydrates that your body needs.

If your stomach troubles are due to a GI bug or food poisoning, you usually should feel better within 48 hours. If you do not, consult a doctor. It could be a more serious bacterial infection or an early sign of COVID-19.

Source: WebMD

### Are you immune to COVID-19 after you have had it?

Based on data from other viruses and coronavirus strains, we know that people make antibodies 7-10 days after infection and that, depending on the type of virus, these antibodies can fend off reinfection for months to years after recovery (antibodies provide immunity only to the specific strain of coronavirus that a person was infected with). Since coronavirus disease (COVID-19) causing SARS-CoV-2 is a new virus, we still do not know how long antibodies will stay in our system after this specific viral infection.

It is highly likely that the antibodies we make after infection with the COVID-19 virus will provide immunity for a period of time. Chinese scientists have conducted some early research with rhesus monkeys and found that antibodies after recovery from COVID-19 protected the monkeys from becoming reinfected after another exposure to the virus. WebMD says, after the SARS outbreak, one study showed antibodies lasted for up to 3 years.

The level and time period of immunity can also depend on how an individual's immune system responds, so there is a lot more we still need to learn about immunity after COVID-19 infection.

Several reports from China have described cases of people with mild symptoms continuing to test positive for the virus, even after recovery. A small study of Chinese healthcare workers also described findings where people continued to test positive even after they had recovered. The study found that these individuals no longer had symptoms and that they did not go on to infect their family members.

According to experts, these scenarios require further study, but are unlikely to reflect reinfection. Research will continue to look at this question, but from what we know about our body's ability to fight off viruses, it is highly unlikely that a person that has recovered from COVID-19 and made antibodies will become reinfected in such a short period of time.



## 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

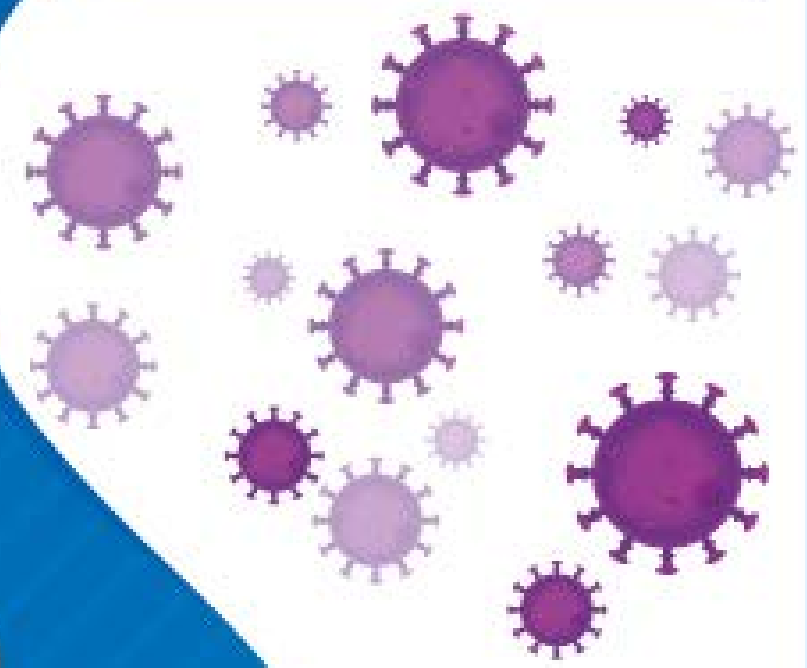


Dispose off used mask in a closed bin and bin should also be handled responsibly



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

## COVID-19 OUTBREAK



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