

Unusual symptoms of COVID-19

DR ZUBAIR KHALED HUQ

What are the more unusual symptoms of COVID-19 and what should you be watching out for? Other symptoms that have also become prevalent in patients are the loss of smell or taste, fatigue and a runny nose, as well as diarrhoea. The reports of these non-respiratory effects started to build as doctors began treating more patients; much of the current scientific understanding of them is still in the early stages and not confirmed by enough research. But recognising they exist could help healthcare professionals spot them sooner and possibly minimise their effects.

Skin rashes and COVID-19 toes: It is not unusual to see skin rashes in someone with a viral infection, what is unclear about COVID-19 is whether the rashes associated with infection are specific to the virus, meaning there is actual virus in the skin, or if they are a manifestation of the immune system reacting to the virus that is elsewhere in the body. COVID-19 toes can be found on the side or sole of the foot and in some cases has been seen on hands and fingers. Doctors have reported a range of skin-related conditions that might be connected to COVID-19, including head-to-toe red rashes, hive-like eruptions, blisters and rashes spreading across larger patches of skin.



Pink eye or conjunctivitis: The Royal College of Ophthalmologists and College of Optometrists has said that in any upper respiratory tract infection, there is a possibility that it could result in viral conjunctivitis. They highlighted that this would be a secondary complication in viruses such as the coronavirus.

Gastrointestinal symptoms: It has now become clear that not all of those infected with COVID-19 display the classic respiratory symptoms that doctors focused on early in the pandemic; many people only

experience diarrhoea, nausea and vomiting. Acknowledging that COVID-19 can affect the gut as well as the respiratory system is critical, especially when it comes to controlling the spread of infection.

Renal symptoms: The gut is not the only open target for the virus. Some studies have reported finding SARS-CoV-2 virus in the urine of infected people, although extensive studies of kidney tissues so far are not conclusive. But among hospitalised patients, for example, doctors are finding

microscopic amounts of blood, as well as hints of proteins, in the urine, both of which are signs of cellular injury to the kidneys even if the patients do not complain of any symptoms.

Hepatic symptoms: Further, over half of the COVID-19 patients seem to have elevated or lower-than-normal levels of liver enzymes, which could signal that the virus has invaded the organ. Combined, those two facts make it reasonable to question whether the virus can infect and injure the liver. Fortunately, current data suggest that COVID-19 does not

lead to dramatic liver failure.

Blood clots and stroke: One of the risks of COVID-19 cases has to do with blood clots, including those that can lead to stroke. However, some experts believe SARS-CoV-2 could be uniquely damaging the circulatory system. As with kidney, lungs, liver and intestinal cells, blood vessel cells also carry the Angiotensin-converting enzyme 2 (ACE2) receptors, which means the virus could be directly infecting the cells that line the vessels and, therefore, contributing to clot formations of small blood clots in different organs.

Altered smell and taste: Another group of intriguing reports from people affected by COVID-19 has to do with their loss of smell and taste. Most of us are familiar with the way congestion from a cold or allergies can impact these senses. The damage may be caused by the inflammatory reaction that causes tissues to swell and compress the nerves, or because of more direct viral infection.

Doctors and other healthcare professionals need to keep their eyes and minds open to these emerging new symptoms of COVID-19 so that the patients can be treated carefully.

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FOOD SAFETY

How to ensure safe vegetables and fruits in COVID-19

PROF M KARIM KHAN

Very often parents ask us whether they will be able to offer seasonal fruits and vegetables to their child or not in this pandemic? How to make them safe or disinfected for consumption and how to preserve them.

The coronavirus is a new virus and we do not know all about this virus yet, but so far there is no evidence that it transmits through food or drink. Established mode of transmission is droplet infection. Questions may arise if droplets are on vegetables or fruits how can we make them disinfected or safe. It is quite simple. Just follow these instructions:

- Wash your own hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Then put the fruits or vegetables one by one under running water for a minimum of twenty seconds. If they require rubbing to clean them, use a soft sponge to clean the dirt attached to the fruits or vegetables.
- No soap, detergent or chemicals are advocated to clean fruits or vegetables.
- After cleaning them as advised above, you may put them in water for more than 20 minutes, which is optional.
- Dry the fruits and vegetables with tissue papers.
- Now it is ready for consumption or to refrigerate for future use.

I think if someone follows these simple steps, it will make their fruits and vegetables safe enough for consumption. Stay safe, stay home and be happy.

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HEALTH bulletin



Loss of smell and taste are solid indicators of COVID-19

An international team created a mobile device app that allows users to report repeatedly on symptoms thought to be relevant for COVID-19 and to self-report results of reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) testing for SARS-CoV-2. The app has been used by more than 2.6 million people in the U.K. and U.S. who believed they had symptoms of COVID-19. Of about 18,500 participants who underwent RT-PCR testing, about 7,000 tested positive.

Loss of smell and taste were much more common in participants who were RT-PCR positive than in those who were RT-PCR negative (65% vs. 22%; odds ratio, 6.74); results were similar regardless of country of domicile, age, or sex. These two symptoms best discriminated test-positive from test-negative participants, although several other symptoms — particularly fatigue and skipped meals — also were significantly more common in the test-positive participants.

This study involves self-selected participants who self-reported various symptoms; there was no formal testing of smell and taste. Nevertheless, the study provides strong evidence that loss of smell and taste are associated with COVID-19. However, one third of people with COVID-19 do not report these symptoms.

Vitamin D: the 'sunshine' vitamin

DR TAUHIDA RAHMAN EREEN

Vitamin D is so important that your body makes it by itself - but only after skin exposure to sufficient sunlight, hence the name 'sunshine' vitamin. Vitamin D is required for many bodily functions. Your body needs this essential vitamin to build and maintain bone and teeth health. Your skin, muscle, brain and nerves also need Vitamin D to function properly. Studies suggest that vitamin D may play an important role in the prevention of various allergic diseases. Vitamin D is a hormone, a nutrient essential for good health.

How to replenish this valuable nutrient: Keep in mind that the best way to get more vitamin D is from sunshine. Thirty minutes of sun exposure to the face, legs, or back - without sunscreen - at least twice a week should give you plenty of vitamin D. Only 20% of our vitamin D is meant to come from our diet. But it is also equally important to get vitamin D from foods or from supplements.

Foods that are high in this vitamin include fatty fishes like tuna and salmon which are a great source of vitamin D. Some dairy products like cottage cheese, soy milk, homemade sour yoghurt are rich in vitamin D. Other sources include orange juice, beef liver, egg yolks, mushroom, carrot, broccoli, avocado and sweet potatoes. Infants vitamin D storage in the first year of life relies on the mother's storage of vitamin D before birth.

Causes that can lead to vitamin D deficiency: Infants who are only breastfed, people with dark skin (which does not absorb the sunlight as well as light skin), obese people, people who have liver or kidney problems and people who use sunscreen often and people who take certain medicines, like anti-seizure drugs or steroids are at risk of vitamin D deficiency.

A long-term deficiency can lead to osteoporosis, bone and muscle aches, depression, dental changes, brittle nails, hair loss and skin sagging. Inadequate exposure to sunlight, poor choice of food, ageing process, obesity, pregnancy and lactating stages - these conditions increase the need for this vital vitamin. It can be consumed in the diet through food or supplements

and by exposing yourself to the sunlight. You can have a simple blood test prescribed by your doctor to detect vitamin D deficiency.

Too much of any good thing is a bad thing. Too much vitamin D can cause an abnormally high blood calcium level, which could result in nausea, constipation, confusion, abnormal heart rhythm, and even kidney stones. But the good news is that it is nearly impossible to get too much vitamin D from sunlight or foods. Nearly all vitamin D overdoses come from supplements so be careful if you are having vitamin D supplements. Always consult your doctor before you take any supplements.

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Physical activity at home during COVID-19

ZAHID BIN SULTAN

Worldwide social distancing policies during the COVID-19 pandemic is restricting people's daily activities. People are getting less opportunity to exercise and participate in outdoor activities like going to the gym or walking in the park. Insufficient physical activity is one of the leading risk factors for death worldwide and a key risk factor for non-communicable diseases. Here is how you can safely exercise in this pandemic.

- If you have fever, cough or difficulty in breathing or any symptoms of COVID-19, stop exercising. Contact your health care provider regarding your symptoms because COVID-19 patients required specific exercise protocols according to the World Health Organisation (WHO). A respiratory physiotherapist can help you to make an effective respiratory exercise and rehabilitation plan.
- Maintain social distancing when exercising outdoors and practice good hand hygiene before and after exercise.
- If you are not used to physical activity, start slowly with low-intensity activities such as walking or low impact exercises for shorter periods and gradually increase the intensity of activity over time.
- Choose the right activity and intensity to reduce the risk of injury.
- If you feel any chest pain or discomfort during any kind of physical activity, stop the activity immediately and consult your doctor. Patients with heart diseases should measure their target heart rate (THR) before any physical activity.

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Rumors and misconceptions unveiled

Can people wear mask while exercising ?

- People should **NOT** wear masks when exercising as masks may reduce the ability to breath comfortably.
- Sweat can make the mask become wet more quickly which makes it difficult to breath and promotes the growth of microorganisms.
- The important preventive measure during exercise is to maintain physical distance of at least one meter from others.



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