

Post COVID-19 recovery care

DR ZUBAIR KHALED HUQ

For those who have contracted COVID-19, the road to recovery can be like looking down the barrel. Not only do you have to deal with fatigue, breathlessness and other physical effects of the disease, but also live with the psychological impact of it. According to a study published in *The Lancet*, even patients who have had mild to moderate symptoms of COVID-19 are likely to grapple with cognitive changes in the aftermath.

Emerging pieces of evidence do point out that those who recover from COVID-19 may face several long-term issues including shortness of breath, fatigue, headache and confusion. While a COVID-19 patient usually recovers in 2 to 3 weeks, studies have pointed out that people may suffer from kidney, lungs, and heart ailments post-recovery as well.

Other possible long-term impacts of COVID-19 include neurological conditions and mental health issues as research shows that the disease can also attack the brain and central nervous system. While the data is still limited and non-conclusive, it is still strongly advised to regularly monitor your symptoms post-recovery to look for any warning signs. There are ways you need to take care of yourself after testing negative for COVID-19.

Do not bounce back to your



previous life as soon as you get back home or test negative for the disease. Give yourself some time to slowly adjust to the old routine, taking one day at a time. Remember, you have just fought a ravaging illness and it is better to get into your old activities gradually, rather than just diving straight in. To gradually get back your memory and concentration levels on track, invest some time daily in relaxing tasks, games and exercises to revamp your brain.

The key is taking it gradually, one thing at a time.

Whether it is a nagging headache or a bout of breathlessness, it is important to pay attention to any warning signs that your body is not doing all right. Always inform your doctor if any such issues arise post-recovery. If you have any chronic illness and have comorbid conditions, a person of senior age group, take regular medication, it is strongly advised

to monitor your symptoms like, checking blood pressure, sugar levels and consult your healthcare provider if the drug dosage needs revision. If you are taking multiple medications, you must consult your physician before making any changes.

While contracting COVID-19 may have given your body a certain degree of immunity from the disease, emerging studies have suggested that it is most likely temporary. Hence,

continue wearing face masks in public places and practice social distancing, wash your hands if you are at home, use sanitisers if outside. As you are on a road to recovery, it is important to prioritise the most important tasks and leave everything else. Preserve your energy as much as possible and postpone unnecessary tasks for a later date. Understand that you do need proper care and rest to feel like yourself again.

Diminished cognitive abilities like lack of concentration, memory recall and recognition issues and brain fog are likely to show up. These difficulties may go away within weeks or months of you starting your recovery but for some people, they can last for a longer time. These difficulties can have an impact on your relationships, daily activities and your professional life as you get back to it, so you and your family should take them seriously.

Pace yourself while slowing down. Restlessness in times like these is understandable but you cannot rush your mind and body back into order, especially in the aftermath of a disease like COVID-19. Get into your old activities gradually, and if it feels too overwhelming, then take time off to recover or talk to a specialist.

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POLIO-ERADICATION

WHO African region receives wild polio-free certification

On 25 August, the Africa Regional Certification Commission certified the World Health Organisation (WHO) African region as wild polio-free after four years without a case. With this historic milestone, five of the six WHO regions – representing over 90% of the world's population – are now free of the wild poliovirus, moving the world closer to achieving global polio eradication. The Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) congratulated the national governments of the 47 countries in the WHO African Region for the achievement.

Pakistan and Afghanistan are the only two countries worldwide that continue to see wild poliovirus transmission.

Strong leadership and innovation were instrumental in stopping the wild poliovirus in the region. Countries successfully coordinated their efforts to overcome major challenges to immunising children, such as high levels of population movement, conflict and insecurity restricting access to health services, and the virus's ability to spread quickly and travel across borders.

The resources and expertise used to eliminate wild polio have significantly contributed to Africa's public health and outbreak response systems.

The WHO African Region's success against wild polio has shown the world that progress against some of the biggest global health challenges is possible. While this is a remarkable milestone, we must not become complacent. The GPEI calls on countries and donors to remain vigilant against all forms of polio. Until every strain is eradicated worldwide, the incredible progress made against polio globally will be at risk.

HEALTH bulletin



Prevalence of SARS-CoV-2 antibodies among healthcare workers in the disease epicentre

The New York City metropolitan area of the USA emerged as an epicentre of the COVID-19 pandemic. A recent population study showed a prevalence of SARS-CoV-2 antibodies of 21% in New York City and 17% in Long Island.

In this study, researchers sought to determine the prevalence of antibodies among healthcare workers by widespread screening for SARS-CoV-2 exposure at a 364-bed hospital in Roslyn, N.Y. (a Long Island community near New York City), where personal protective equipment (PPE) use was based on Centres for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines.

During March and April 2020, symptomatic employees underwent nasopharyngeal testing for the virus, and all employees were offered antibody testing. Of 3,046 employees (mean age, 43), 56% underwent antibody testing, and 10% of those tested employees were positive for antibodies.

In this study, the rate of SARS-CoV-2 infection was substantially lower among healthcare workers than among the general public in Long Island. The authors conclude that, because hospital healthcare workers "are exposed to a much higher density of the virus," the results provide strong evidence for the effectiveness of PPE use according to CDC guidelines.

Rehabilitation of dementia by occupational therapy

RABEYA FERDOUS

Mrs. X is a 62 years old dementia patient. She is suffering from this for two years. Her problem has increased in this pandemic. She also has forgetfulness. Due to the pandemic, we have to maintain some hygiene practices like washing hands for at least 20 seconds and use a mask when going out but it gets difficult for her to remember everything. This may increase her risk of COVID-19 infection.

Like Mrs. X, many patients are suffering from dementia. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), at least 7% of the population over the age of 60 years is suffering from dementia. Occupational therapists play an important role to rehabilitate dementia patients. Occupational therapists work with remedial, restorative treatments and rehabilitation of people with physical, cognitive, psychosocial and developmental impairments.

Due to COVID-19, dementia patients face problems like social isolation, difficulty to perform activities of daily living and problems with intrapersonal and interpersonal communication.

The occupational therapist works for the functional wellbeing of dementia patients, as well as ensuring good mental health during the stay at home. They educate the patient and caregiver about proper safety at home, advises the caregiver about how to maintain the patient's

daily schedule and manage them at home by maintaining proper hygiene, helps with memory retraining of the patient, provides psychological support, applies energy conservation and stress management techniques, etc. and helps the dementia patients with rehabilitation.

According to a new study 40% of people with severe COVID-19 experience neurological complications including confusion, delirium, higher risk of stroke and other brain-related complications. In these cases, an occupational therapist can provide treatment according to the patient's condition.

Older people become more stressed during the quarantine. We need to support and help them to cope with this situation by:

- Informing the older adult about

how to keep themselves safe. If they forget try to write and give them visual cues and remind them to do those.

- Remind them to take medicine on time
- Engage them in leisure activities like reading books or newspaper, watching a movie, gardening etc.
- Engage them in physical exercises and encourage to continue walking at home or on the rooftop.

Occupational therapy is equally as important as physical therapy for people of all ages. It is an absolute essential to helping people regain their independence and ability to do what they love and enjoy in life.

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Call to invest more in mental health services



Mental health is one of the most neglected areas of public health. Close to 1 billion people are living with a mental disorder, 3 million people die every year from the harmful use of alcohol and one person dies every 40 seconds by suicide. And now, billions of people around the world have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which is having a further impact on people's mental health.

Yet, relatively few people around the world have access to quality mental health services. In low- and middle-income countries, more than 75% of people with mental, neurological and substance use disorders receive no treatment for their condition at all. Furthermore, stigma, discrimination, punitive legislation and human rights abuses are still widespread.

That is why to encourage public action around the world, a World Mental Health Day campaign, Move for mental health: let's invest will kick off in September 2020 to call for a massive scale-up in investment in mental health.

With the disruption in health services, countries are finding innovative ways to provide mental health care, and initiatives to strengthen psychosocial support have sprung up. Yet, because of the scale of the problem, the vast majority of mental health needs remain unaddressed as countries spend on average only 2% of their health budgets on mental health. The response is hampered by chronic under-investment in mental health promotion, prevention and care for many years before the pandemic.

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Rumors and Misconceptions Unveiled

Can COVID-19 be transmitted in areas with hot and humid climates?

- The COVID-19 virus can be transmitted in any climate, including areas with hot and humid weather.

The best and most effective way to protect yourself against COVID-19 is by maintaining physical distance of at least 1 metre from others and frequently cleaning your hands with alcohol-based hand rub or washing them with soap and water.

By doing this you eliminate viruses that may be on your hands and avoid infection that could occur by then touching your eyes, mouth and nose.

Can cold weather kill the new corona virus?

- There is no reason to believe that cold weather can kill the new corona virus or other diseases.

The normal human body temperature remains around 36.5 to 37 °C, regardless of the external temperature or weather.

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