

Do's and don'ts during COVID-19 pandemic

DR ZUBAIR KHALED HUQ

COVID-19 is wreaking havoc worldwide. The pandemic is not going to go overnight; we should learn to live with it. To do that, we should know what things we should do and what to avoid.

Do wear a mask covering face at all times when you are outdoors. Be careful about touching your face as this could increase your risk. Do not stop social distancing because of a false sense of security as this is still important to protect you. Do wash your hands before you wear your mask. Only touch the ear loops while wearing and opening it.

Do stay informed of the situation as events and advisories are rapidly evolving. Credible resources include the Centres for Disease Control and the World Health Organisation. Do practice good hand hygiene and wash your hands frequently, especially before you eat, after using the toilet, blowing your nose or coughing and before you touch your face.

If you cannot wash your hands, use alcohol-based sanitiser with more than 60% alcohol. Frequently wash your hands with soap water, since the fat layer of the virus could be



broken if you come in contact with soap for at least 20 seconds.

Do cover your cough or sneeze. The best way to cough or sneeze is into your elbow and not your hands. Do work from home if you can. Do leave your home only for essential reasons, such as buying food or medications. If you have to go out, protect yourself and your family members from close contact (stay more than 6 feet away). Do not share water or utensils with family members. Do cancel elective dental, medical and non-essential appointments to

hospitals and clinics as these can expose one to high virus load.

Move away from others who cough or sneeze. Wipe down all surfaces you come into contact with. Do wipe down doorknobs, countertops, stairway railings and switches in your home every 2-3 days. For kids, do wipe down their toys or wash them in soap and water. Wash your hands after you handle a package. Virus particles can survive for days on hard surfaces so it is important to keep these clean.

One should avoid crowded places since they can have high

virus load. A large number of persons can be asymptomatic carriers who transmit the disease unknowingly. Persons suffering from an influenza-like illness must be confined to home.

Adequate sleep and rest is a must. Take immunity-boosting drugs, like vitamin C and D3, zinc and high protein diet with regular exercise. Keep senior citizens separated from others. Persons who have comorbidities like diabetes, heart, kidney or liver disease must take extra precautions.

This virus cannot remain alive

without human contact. If we do not let them enter into our body by locking down all entries like nose, mouth and eyes, it has to die outside without infecting anyone. Since it is a respiratory virus, it has a predilection towards nose and mouth. While talking, coughing or sneezing one transmits this, but the vicious cycle ends by keeping oneself covered with a mask.

Hugging, kissing and shaking hands should be avoided. We should permanently stop the habit of public spitting, to prevent aerosols and small particles contaminating the environment. Proper disposal of masks, gloves, and napkins after use is a must to stop transmission. Various drugs that are non-specific and under trial should not be tried by anyone without a doctor's prescription.

Any specific food and medication will not give a complete cure from the virus. Solace of mind with restricted lifestyle, exercise and abiding the rules and regulations given by your doctor can boost immunity and protect the body by itself.

The writer is a gerontologist and a public health specialist.
E-mail: zubairkhaledjoy@gmail.com

COVID COLLATERAL

Acute depression, stress, anxiety higher during peak of the pandemic

Rates of elevated psychological distress, including depression and anxiety symptoms, were found among Australian adults during the peak of the COVID-19 outbreak in Australia, according to a new study published in the open-access journal PLOS ONE by Jill Newby of the University of New South Wales at the Black Dog Institute, Sydney, Australia, and colleagues.

In the new study, researchers used an online survey, administered March 27 through April 7—now considered to be the peak of the COVID-19 outbreak in Australia—to examine mental health responses to the pandemic among 5,070 Australian adults. The online questionnaire asked participants about their fears, behavioural responses to COVID-19, psychological distress, alcohol use, and physical activity. A similar survey had already been carried out among 2,174 Australians in early March, when cases in the country were still low.

While the questionnaires could not be used to make any diagnoses, most participants reported that their mental health had worsened during the outbreak, with 55% saying it had worsened a little and 23% saying it had worsened a lot. Around half of all participants reported moderate to extreme loneliness and worry about their financial situation. Between 20.3 and 24.1% of people surveyed had been experiencing severe or extremely severe levels of depression, anxiety and stress over the week preceding their survey, and another 18 to 22% had moderate symptoms.

Newby says: "We wanted to provide a snapshot of the mental health of the general community during the COVID-19 outbreak and look into the impact of the enforcement of social distancing laws, in Australia."

HEALTH bulletin



Breastfeeding is safe after anaesthesia

New guidelines published by the Association of Anaesthetists in the journal Anaesthesia say that breastfeeding is safe after the mother has had anaesthesia, as soon as she is alert and able to feed.

"The guidelines say there is no need to discard any breast milk due to fear of contamination, since evidence shows that anaesthetic and non-opioid painkiller drugs are transferred to breast milk in only very small amounts," explains Dr Mike Kinsella of the Association of Anaesthetists Safety Committee, based at St Michael's Hospital, Bristol, UK, and colleagues. "For almost all of these drugs, there is no evidence of effects on the breastfed infant."

However, they caution that drugs such as opioids and benzodiazepines should be used with caution, especially after multiple doses and in babies up to 6 weeks old. In this situation, the infant should be observed for signs of abnormal drowsiness and respiratory depression, especially if the woman is also showing signs of sedation.

They also add that codeine should not be used by breastfeeding women following concerns of excessive sedation in some infants, related to differences in metabolism.

Lifestyle during COVID-19: The 'new normal'

PROF DR MANZOOR HUSSAIN

Since there is no specific cure or vaccine for COVID-19 is available yet, we could prevent the spread of this deadly pandemic by changing our lifestyles and following some etiquettes.

Some specific rules suggested by the World Health Organisation (WHO) needs to be followed. For example, washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, using a mask while outdoors, maintaining social distancing, staying indoors and avoiding public gatherings. We also need to be accustomed to a few more social etiquettes like giving up shaking hands, hugging and greeting by kissing someone's cheeks.

Lockdowns alone may not be the only way to prevent COVID-19. Rather, avoiding public gathering and quarantining of the elderly and vulnerable is the best way to reduce the mortality rate by the disease. Simultaneously, efforts should be made to formulate effective strategies for the already existing service facilities to improve the necessary health service delivery for the treatment of the sick population. It is imperative to have proper planning and implementation of the existing healthcare system.

Diagnosis should be confirmed through definitive examination and triage needs to be done for COVID-19, suspected and non COVID-19 cases based on clinical criteria. Properly diagnosed and identified cases need to be

hospitalised or isolated as needed. Everyone else who has come in contact with them must be traced and needs to be quarantined and monitored separately.

The most important thing is to emphasise on the need to use masks in public and use them properly. We must motivate the public to do so, i.e. to eliminate the habit of wearing the mask over or below the head/around the neck and hanging around the ear on one side. Always make sure that the mask is well fitted covering the nose and chin. Hands must be sanitised or washed before touching the face, eyes or nose. There should be strict protocols and implementation of health hygiene etiquettes in all public transportation, bazaars and shopping centres.

We should try to increase immunity naturally by having adequate sleep, as sleeping and

the immune system are closely linked. The antioxidants found in vegetables, fruits, nuts and seeds help reduce inflammation by fighting compounds called free radicals. Healthy fats found in olive oil, freshwater fish and seafood can reduce inflammation and increase immunity. It is also important to drink plenty of fluids to keep yourself well hydrated. Exercising regularly can keep you fit and help to reduce your stress.

Until the vaccine for COVID-19 is available, we have to get used to the 'new normal' lifestyle to cope with our lives. There is no alternative to abiding etiquette and proper hygiene practice. Gradually we will have to learn to adapt to the pandemic and other mutant viruses that may emerge in future.

The writer is the President of Bangladesh Paediatric Association.
E-mail: manzoor-hussain@hotmail.com



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.

Public awareness by:



In Search of Excellence