

Is a lockdown inevitable in Bangladesh?

DR SHAHRIAR ROZEN, DR TAHMID KASHEM, DR JANNATUL MAWA

The new infectious variants of COVID-19 are menacing all around the world forcing many countries to impose lockdown-type measures. Although the pandemic was under control in Bangladesh a few months ago, the country is experiencing a sudden surge of infection in recent weeks, leading many to wonder if the government would be forced to impose lockdown-type measures in a desperate attempt to control the pandemic.

The alarming surge of new infection and hospitalisation is likely to continue in the coming weeks, due to the spread of the highly infectious new variants and reluctance of people to follow safety guidelines. According to the World Health Organisation, 62% of the dedicated ICU beds are occupied in Bangladesh, including 84% of the occupied ICUs in Dhaka city. The health system likely would be unable to serve the severely ill patients if the upward trend of infection continues for a few more weeks.

Data from different countries show that mass gatherings and indoor activities are among the major factors for spreading COVID-19. This is why all public gatherings and unnecessary movements should be prohibited immediately along with strict enforcement of laws. This should include a complete ban



on all gatherings, social and recreational activities, closure of parks, recreational and community centres. Such a ban at this point will reduce the upward trend of the infection, which is essential for the safe operation of businesses to keep the economy functional.

Simply put, partial operation of businesses and commercial activities would be possible if all mass gatherings and unnecessary movements are immediately prohibited. If strict targeted measures are not enforced immediately on mass gatherings and violating public health measures, there will be no option other than total lockdown on all workplaces and activities in the coming weeks.

Recently, the government of Bangladesh has announced an 18-point directive to control the spread of the virus, but a number of them are voluntary guidelines. The directives lack clear mandates for the local governing body in taking restrictive measures, which may make it challenging to implement the policy direction at the local level.

The government should develop a robust matrix with defined parameters and clear mandates to promote a consistent approach to implementing the restrictions all over Bangladesh. Local governing bodies can take uniform decisions on restrictive measures within their local area based on the mandates outlined in the matrix.

Based on the lessons learnt from other countries, the government can adopt a risk-based matrix with defined parameters to implement targeted restrictive measures. The matrix can use hospitalisation/ ICU admission rates and test positivity rate as parameters, which will indicate the current burden of the virus on the health system, as well as, the current level of transmission respectively.

The following matrix may be proposed to inform decision-making to control the pandemic in Bangladesh:

• **Phase 1 (Restrict – 5-10% case positivity rate):** Allow outdoor gatherings of up to 100 people and indoor gatherings of

up to 50 people, allow businesses and commercial activities to operate with safety measures in place.

• **Phase 2 (Control – 60% occupancy of the dedicated ICU units and 10-20% case positivity rate):** prohibit all types of public gatherings, social and recreational activities; prohibit inter-district movement; allow businesses to operate under restrictions.

• **Phase 3 (Lockdown – 80% occupancy of the dedicated ICU units and more than 20% case positivity rate with an upward pattern):** Impose national lockdown for at least three weeks with a complete ban on non-essential travel, business, and public gatherings.

The government of Bangladesh has recently flagged 31 new districts as high contamination areas, which is undoubtedly worrying. Not prohibiting public gatherings and unnecessary movements will likely lead the country towards a complete lockdown. It is a great that the government has imposed a week-long lockdown. But the situation should be observed very carefully and law enforcement should be strict.

Dr Shahriar Rozen is a public health professional and policy analyst currently working in Canada. Email: rozen@ualberta.ca; Dr Tahmid Kashem is a public health professional and policy analyst currently working in Canada. Email: kashem@ualberta.ca; Dr Jannatul Mawa is an MPH Candidate at the University of Alberta, Canada. Email: mawa@ualberta.ca

COVID-19 RISKS

How does living with children affect adults' risk for COVID-19 and its outcomes?

During the second wave in England, SARS-CoV-2 infection and related hospital admission (but not ICU admission or death) were slightly elevated among younger adults who lived with children.

As children are less susceptible to SARS-CoV-2 infection, often are asymptomatic, and rarely develop severe COVID-19, their role in disease spread is unclear. Researchers in England analysed national data on COVID-19 and individual health status in a study involving >9.3 million adults aged 18 to 65 and almost 2.7 million aged >65. Linked data on household members showed that 37% of younger adults and 3% of older adults lived with children.

During the pandemic's first wave (February–August 2020), COVID-19–related outcomes (infection, hospital admission, ICU admission, and death) were not appreciably increased among adults living with children. During the second wave (September–December 2020), adults aged 65 and younger showed increases in risk for acquiring COVID-19 and COVID-19–related hospital admission. Risks for ICU admission or death did not increase. Among adults older than 65, living with children was associated with significantly elevated risks for COVID-19–related ICU admission and death.

These data indicate that during the second wave of the pandemic in England, children appeared to have a role in the transmission of SARS-CoV-2. However, the excess risk for COVID-19 among younger adults living with children could be related to other factors; furthermore, the absolute risk increase was modest, and severe disease and death did not occur more frequently than in the first wave. By contrast, older adults living with children were at higher risk for unfavourable COVID-19 outcomes, stressing the importance of their protection and vaccination.

HEALTH bulletin



Miscarriage tied to increased mortality

Miscarriage is associated with increased premature mortality in mothers, suggests an observational study in The BMJ.

In the Nurses' Health Study II, researchers assessed over 100,000 women who had been pregnant. Just over a quarter said they had a pregnancy that ended in spontaneous abortion. During 24 years' follow-up, there were roughly 2,900 premature deaths (i.e., death before age 70).

After multivariable adjustment, women who had a spontaneous abortion had higher risk for premature death than those who did not (hazard ratio, 1.19). Risks were higher for women who had multiple miscarriages or had them at a younger age.

The risk appeared to be at least partly driven by increased risk for cardiovascular death. The authors speculate that there could be similar pathways — such as insulin resistance or chronic kidney disease — that could lead to both spontaneous abortion and cardiovascular disease.

The authors conclude: "Our results suggest that spontaneous abortion could be an early marker of future health risk in women, including premature death."

How mental resilience can help through the pandemic

VIVIAN HUIZENGA

Resilience is the ability to stay strong during hard times. How are you doing this year? Looking back, what was the most difficult part? How did you handle that? Inner strength is good because then you can handle whatever problems come your way next time. There has been a lot of research about the benefits of building resilience in children and preparing them for a changing world.

In countries where children have everything, they never have to struggle, and others who take care of their problems for them are not equipped for handling life changes. Often parents do not want to see their child being hurt or struggling and feel better just 'doing it for them.'

This has 2 consequences – the child is denied the feeling of accomplishment and confidence in him/herself, and the child is not used to experiencing struggle, therefore enters adulthood with few tools to handle difficulties that are bound to come in life. They run to others for help or expect their partners to fix everything for them and blame them if they do not. Wise parents allow just the right amount of struggle to allow their children to build resilience.

Resilience is like a tree that has been beaten by strong winds year after year. Its roots grow stronger and hold the ground more firmly after every storm. It may be leaning and have lost a few leaves and branches, but it is still holding onto the ground with a new set of lessons

to cherish. People are like trees. We react and grow stronger under difficult times. The pandemic has been a difficult time. It has changed our entire daily lives, our way of interacting with family, friends, travelling, and the workplace. Some of us withered at first, appalled and fearful of all the freedoms we had lost. After a time, some became accustomed to the new routines, accepted limitations, and even found benefits within the 'new normal.' It is their deep, firm roots tied to the ground which gave them the confidence to hang on.

Keeping yourself calm with a cup of tea, yoga, going for a walk, listening to music, or anything that helps to divert the focus towards productivity is good. Only thinking about own self could be stressful and create anxiety. Taking care of others is also a good way to overcome self-obsession. It feels fulfilling to do something nice for others. Listen deeply to others. Realise that others are uncomfortable

and maybe afraid too.

Neurologically if you pull yourself out of the thinking mode and stay in your body, this balances the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. Things, like sensing physical feelings, listening to birds, enjoying flowers, feeling a warm breeze, and just being aware, are calming and centring. A few moments here and there add up to strengthening your inner self, and then your tree is even stronger!

Following the above advice, those who struggle may grow roots for you and prepare you and your children for the changes that come in the future. With technology and fast-paced changes in education, production, business, and jobs, we want to ensure our children are ready for anything that comes their way in the future.

Vivian Huizenga is a Counselor at the International School Dhaka. E-mail: vivianhuizenga@gmail.com



Mistakes even healthy people make



There are some mistakes that even the most health concerned people can also commit without knowing. Let us have a look at some of these and try to avoid as much as possible.

Too little sleep: Long-term sleep loss is linked to dementia, heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. You can also add problems with your immune system, depression and anxiety, and ongoing pain to that list. Talk to your doctor if you have trouble getting enough sleep.

Not drinking water first: Your body sends out signals when you are hungry or thirsty. But it is easy to confuse the two. Both sensations can give you a headache or make you feel tired and dizzy. The next time you feel like snacking, try gulping a glass of water first. Other signs you need more fluid include dry eyes or skin, dry mouth, dark pee, or not peeing very much.

Using a cotton swab in your ear: You may end up pushing wax deeper into the ear canal. And you could puncture your eardrum if the swab goes too far. That can cause hearing loss. Your ear is pretty good at cleaning itself. But it is possible to make more wax than normal. If that happens to you, ask your doctor what to do.

Not checking for drug interactions: Some things can change how your medication works. That includes food, supplements, and other drugs. Some of these interactions can make your medicine less effective or cause unwanted side effects. Always read the warning labels that come with prescription or drugs and ask your doctor.

Source: WebMD

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Happiness is a timely Preventive Health Checkup



Health screening is an effective way to detect a specific disease or condition early, even when there have been no symptoms or signs of the disease. Detecting a condition early means getting the right treatment at the right time and this gives patients better control over their health.

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Plot 15 Road 71 Gulshan Dhaka 1212

Appointment 02 22 22 62 466 | 10666

www.uhlbd.com facebook/uhlbd info@uhlbd.com