

Third-hand smoke and its harmful effects on children

DR NUR-A-SAFRINA RAHMAN

The dangers of smoking and exposure to smoke have been well documented for many years. Researchers have recently discovered third-hand smoke. It is the residue of tobacco smoke that remains on surfaces and in the air after a cigarette is smoked. It sticks to almost everything in a smoking area, including skin, hair, clothes, furniture, floors, dust, car seats, and pet hair and feathers. Inhaling third-hand smoke gases or touching contaminated surfaces can expose people to these chemicals.

Effects of third-hand smoke on children:

Young children and newborns are particularly vulnerable to the effects of third-hand smoke because of their developing bodies and their tendency to touch and put things in their mouths. They also spend a lot of time indoors, which exposes them to smoke on surfaces and in the air.

Third-hand smoke in young children can cause asthma, ear infections, respiratory infections, persistent coughs, and brain damage. The Department of Psychology at San Diego State University found that ex-smokers' homes retain third-hand smoke for six months after quitting. Nicotine and NNK, a tobacco-specific carcinogen, were also found in people's homes after they quit smoking.

Ways to reduce third-hand smoking residue and avoid any health hazards:

- Wash your clothes, bedding, and home fabrics. Depending on pollution, fabrics may need repeated washing.
 - Regularly dusting and cleaning surfaces reduces third-hand smoke. Dilute and use cleaning solutions according to manufacturer instructions.
 - Have carpets cleaned professionally.
 - Clean toys frequently.
 - Discard contaminated items that cannot be cleaned.
 - Encouraging smokers to wash their hands often and before touching children.
 - Not allowing smoking in the home or car and ensuring that no one smokes near children or pets.
- It is also important to note that it is impossible to completely remove third-hand smoke residue, so it is the best to prevent exposure to it in the first place by educating the smokers about the dangers of third-hand smoke and encouraging them to quit.

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Signs that you may have had COVID-19



STAR HEALTH DESK

The COVID-19 virus may have been around longer than we originally thought. So people may have had the virus and recovered from it without knowing. Some telltale signs could indicate that you're one of those people.

A 'bad cold'

It is not uncommon to get a cold during the winter. But if you had one in late 2019 or early 2020, there's a chance your cold might have been COVID-19. One way to know the difference is that COVID can stick around 2 weeks or longer, while a cold typically lasts only a few days. And unlike a cold, COVID could have caused a fever and made it hard for you to breathe.

Shortness of breath

This is not typically a symptom of a cold or the flu but feeling like you can't breathe is common with COVID-19. You may have thought you had bronchitis, which COVID-19 can cause. Or it may have felt like anxiety or a panic attack. But with COVID, shortness of breath lasts longer than

a panic attack. It also comes with flu-like symptoms.

Persistent cough

If you had a dry cough that took a long time to go away, it could have been a symptom of COVID-19. It would have been different from a cough caused by a cold. It would have started mildly, but then got worse during the next 5 to 7 days.

Red, watery eyes

Throughout the pandemic, we have been told to wash our hands often and avoid touching our face. One reason for this is that COVID-19 can affect your eyes. If you had conjunctivitis (pink eye), watering eyes, or blurred vision, it might have been caused by the virus.

Heart palpitations or chest pain

COVID-19 can affect your heart too. It can cause heart palpitations, making your heartbeat fast or flutter, or pound. You may have had tightness in your chest. All of these things can happen even after the virus clears your body. Episodes like this can be noticeable for up to 2 weeks in mild cases or for 6 weeks in

more serious ones.

Extreme fatigue

Feeling really tired is a common symptom of COVID-19. So, if you had that kind of extreme fatigue that didn't get better with plenty of sleep, it could have been a sign of the virus. The feeling can come back again days and sometimes weeks later.

Loss of smell or taste

If foods and drinks seemed to taste different than usual (or had no taste), or you weren't able to pick up on odors for a couple of weeks, you could've been infected with the virus. Nearly 80% of people who test positive have this issue, and it's usually a sign of a mild case.

Yes, it is true that many of the mutations that have been identified in the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which causes COVID-19, do not appear to significantly affect the symptoms of the disease or its severity. However, mutations may make the virus more contagious. So, it is important to continue monitoring the situation closely and adapting our strategies accordingly.

HAVE A NICE DAY Catch Cortisol if you can!

DR RUBAUL MURSHED

Cortisol is widely known as the body's stress hormone. Chronic stress harms our mind and body. "It's not stress that kills us, it's our reaction to it."

Cortisol is one of the key hormones like insulin, melatonin, reproductive and thyroid hormones and other major ones. These chemical messengers affect blood sugar to blood pressure, growth and fertility, sex drive, metabolism, and sleep. They influence our daily thoughts and actions. Glucagon, epinephrine (adrenaline), norepinephrine and growth hormones are also stress hormones, but cortisol is the main one.

However, cortisol is an essential hormone that regulates our body's stress response and affects nearly every organ and tissue. Our adrenal glands produce and release this hormone into our bloodstream when we are stressed. It's our natural "flight or fight" response that has kept us alive for thousands of years. This can help people adapt to stressful events or danger. On another note, high cortisol can be harmful over time. Reducing stress is the most direct way to lower cortisol. In other cases, high cortisol might be the result of an underlying medical condition or a side effect of a medication.

Certainly, higher cortisol is a major issue. Besides controlling blood sugar, sleep pattern, or high blood pressure, it can cause muscle weakness, frequent urination, mood changes, weight gain, especially in the face and abdomen and decreased sex drive. If it remains high for a long period of time, it may lower the body's immune response.

Forgiving and caring for others reduces the pain of unpleasant stress. Mindfulness and getting rid of egos can also be helpful in reducing stress.

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Cervical cancer prevention

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Cervical cancer is the fourth most common cancer among women globally, with an estimated 604 000 new cases and 342 000 deaths in 2020. About 90% of the new cases and deaths worldwide in 2020 occurred in low- and middle-income countries. The Human Papillomavirus (HPV) that causes cervical cancer is mainly transmitted through sexual contact and most people are infected with HPV shortly after the onset of sexual activity. More than 90% of them clear the infection eventually.

Vaccination against HPV and screening and treatment of pre-cancer lesions are cost-effective ways to prevent cervical cancer. Cervical cancer can be cured if diagnosed at an early stage and treated promptly. Comprehensive cervical cancer control includes primary prevention (vaccination against HPV), secondary prevention (screening and treatment of pre-cancerous lesions), tertiary prevention (diagnosis and treatment of invasive cervical cancer) and palliative care.

Cervical cancer prevention should encompass a multidisciplinary, including community education, social mobilisation, vaccination, screening, treatment, and palliative care.

It is important for both girls and boys to be offered appropriate health information and warnings about tobacco use, as well as sex education tailored to their age and culture. Additionally, promoting and providing access to condoms for those engaged in sexual activity

can help. Male circumcision can also reduce STI risk and offer health benefits. Healthcare professionals and personal and cultural values should guide these decisions.

HPV vaccination

There are currently four vaccines that have been prequalified by the World Health Organisation (WHO). To prevent cervical cancer WHO recommends vaccinating girls aged 9 to 14 years.

Screening and treatment of cervical pre-cancer lesions

Cervical cancer screening involves testing for HPV infection. When screening detects an HPV infection or pre-cancerous lesions, these can easily be treated and cancer can be avoided. Screening can also detect cancer at an early stage where treatment has a high potential for cure.

Screening should start at 30 years of age in the general population of women, with regular screening with a validated HPV test every 5 to 10 years, and at 25 years of age for women living with HIV. Women living with HIV also need to be screened every 3 to 5 years.

A woman with symptoms of suspicion for cervical cancer must be referred to an appropriate facility for further evaluation, diagnosis and treatment.

WHO has developed guidance and tools on how to prevent and control cervical cancer through vaccination, screening and treatment, management of invasive cancer. WHO works with countries and partners to develop and implement comprehensive programmes in line with the global strategy.

Managing winter Asthma

For many people, Asthma attacks may happen more often in the winter. The common cold and flu are both more likely to strike in the winter and can lead to asthma flare-ups.

While you are indoors, you breathe in asthma triggers such as mold, dust mites. When you venture out, you could have an Asthma attack from inhaling the cold air.

You can lower your family's risk of these illnesses, following these tips:

- When you inhale something that triggers your Asthma, your airways, the tubes in your lungs that carry air can become tight and clogged with mucus. You may cough, wheeze, and struggle to catch your breath. Talk to your doctor about having



tests done to find out what your triggers are. Once you know them, you can make some changes at home that may help.

- Limit your time around pets. Having a dog or cat in your home may trigger your Asthma. Try to keep it out of the bedroom.
- Cover bedding. If mites are a trigger, use mite proof covers on the mattress, box springs, and pillows. These help keep dust mites away overnight.

• Keep the house cool and dry; dust mites as well as mold don't grow very well in these conditions.

- Wash your hands. This helps keep viruses from getting into your body when you touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Stay away from people who are ill. Maintain distance with a coworker or friend who has a cold or flu.
- Get a flu shot.



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