

## COVID 19 PANDEMIC: SOCIAL ASPECTS AND SAFE BEHAVIOURS

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### Abstract

Coronavirus, a recently discovered virus is responsible for the causation of Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) which is an infectious disease. The population at a higher risk of developing an advanced disease are elderly people, cardiac patients, diabetics, malignancy, and chronic respiratory illness. Prevention of the disease is best practiced by being informed about the disease, the symptoms, the virus, and its transmission. The mode of transmission of the COVID-19 virus is basically through saliva or nasal discharge of an infected patient when the patient coughs or sneezes.

**Keywords**--Coronavirus, COVID-19, respiratory illness.

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### INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus, a recently discovered virus is responsible for the causation of Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) which is an infectious disease. Respiratory illness with mild to moderate symptoms that recover without any particular treatment is the common presentation of COVID-19 disease [1].

The population at a higher risk of developing an advanced disease are elderly people, cardiac patients, diabetics, malignancy, and chronic respiratory illness [2].

Prevention of the disease is best practiced by being informed about the disease, the symptoms, the virus, and its transmission. Hand washing or using an alcohol-based preparation for hand rub and avoidance of touching the face, particularly the nose is the best way of prevention of COVID-19 disease [3].

The mode of transmission of the COVID-19 virus is basically through saliva or nasal discharge of an infected patient when the patient coughs or sneezes [4].

### Symptoms

A varied range of symptoms have been documented in patients with the disease from mild respiratory symptoms to full-blown ARDS. The symptoms may develop after 2-14 days post-exposure [5].

1. Cough
2. Breathlessness

At least two of the following symptoms:

1. Fever
2. Chills
3. Myalgia
4. Headache
5. Sore throat
6. Loss of smell or taste [5]

### PREVENTION OF COVID-19

#### \* Know how the disease spreads

As there is presently no preventive vaccine for the disease, the only way to prevent the disease is by avoiding exposure to the virus [6].

It mainly shows person to person spread [7]. In close contact with distance between two individuals less than 6 feet. Droplet infection through coughing, sneezing or talking by a positive patient droplets, when inhaled or ingested by a person in contact, might develop into disease. Even an asymptomatic individual can spread the disease according to some studies [3].

#### 1) Frequent handwashing

Washing hands regularly, for at least 20 seconds, with soap and water.

Use of sanitizer containing more than 60% alcohol. Rub your hands and allow it to dry properly.

Avoid touching the nose, mouth, and eyes before handwashing.

#### 2) Avoid close contact and maintain distance

Contact with sick people in the household or neighborhood should be avoided as much as possible and maintain a distance of at least 6 feet to avoid the spread of the disease. This can be done by:

- a. Avoid social gatherings
- b. Stay out of crowded places
- c. Keeping distance is particularly important for high-risk patients

#### 3) Cover mouth and nose with a mask or cloth

Proper use of masks in public places.

Avoid the use of cloth in children below 2 years and patients who are unconscious or those with difficulty in breathing or those who are unable to remove the mask without help.

Facemask meant for healthcare workers should not be used. The face cover should not be used as a substitute for social distancing. Thus maintaining social distance should be continued.

#### 4) Cover your nose and mouth

- a. Cover mouth and nose with a tissue if no mask is available or inside of elbow should be used.
- b. Tissues once used should be discarded safely in assigned dustbins.
- c. Immediately wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or a sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.

### 5) Clean and disinfect

Disinfection and cleaning of all the surfaces in contact should be done frequently. Detergent, soap, and water should be used before disinfection followed by household disinfectant.

### 6) Social distancing

Social distancing, also known as "physical distancing," involves maintaining space outside of your home between yourself and others. To practice social or physical distancing:

- a. Maintain at least 6 feet distance
- b. Avoid staying in groups
- c. Avoid crowded places and social gatherings
- d. Spacing and social distancing is one of the best tools that we need to avoid being exposed to this virus and slowing its spread locally and nationwide.
- e. Stay indoors as much as possible. Social distancing is particularly important for those at higher risk from COVID-19 for severe illness.

#### Why practice social distancing?

The main route of spread of COVID-19 is when an individual comes in contact with a positive person for a long period. When a carrier of virus talks, coughs, or sneezes, they generate droplets that are transmitted into the air and land for a brief period of time and eventually get deposited in the nose or mouth of contacts. Droplets may take an inhalational form and get deposited into the lungs.

Recent studies show that even asymptomatic individuals are responsible for the spread of the disease. One theory suggests that it may spread through an infected surface to the hands of a normal person and when the person touches his/her mouth or nose, it may get deposited in the respiratory tract of the person. But this is not considered the main route of transmission. The virus can survive on a surface and factors such as humidity, sunlight, and the type of surface influence the survival of Coronavirus. Social distancing reduces the chances of coming in contact with the infected surfaces and infected people [8].

Every single individual plays a role in dampening the spread of disease and social responsibility in terms of self-protection and community protection.

#### Tips for social distancing

- Abide by guidelines issued by concerned authorities.
- In the case of grocery or medicine shopping, maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from others. Alternative options can be considered such as:
- If possible, use mail for ordering stuff
- Use food or grocery delivery service
- Always cover your nose and mouth with a mask or cloth at public places [9].
- Avoid the use of cloth in children below 2 years and patients who are unconscious or those with difficulty in breathing or those who are unable to remove the mask without help.
- Despite covering the face and mouth, social distancing should be practiced by maintaining a minimum distance of 6 feet from others. [11].
- Avoid gatherings of any kind nearby. Do not send children for play dates. E-learning for children should be encouraged when schools are closed.
- Work from home should be practiced as far as possible.
- Avoid any kind of public transport.
- Practice E-learning methods from home.

#### Cleaning and Disinfecting the Facility

- Clean
  - Disposable gloves should be used for the purpose of cleaning and disinfection.
  - Soap and water followed by disinfectant should be used.

- Cleaning with soap and water helps in the reduction of the infective load and removes impurities and dirt from the surface whereas disinfection helps in killing of germs on the surfaces.
  - Practice routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces.
  - Surfaces which are frequently used should be disinfected more frequently.
- Surfaces and items used in public spaces should be washed before any use takes place.
- High touch surfaces include:
    - Door buttons, tables, switches of light, handles, desks, computers, keyboards, toilets, countertops, faucets, sinks, etc.[10].

#### • Disinfect

Various products have specific recommendations for use. Usage guidelines should be strictly adhered to. Ensure proper ventilation while using a disinfectant. Practice using disposable gloves.

Diluted household bleach solutions can also be used for surface use where appropriate.

Check the label for expiry.

Many bleaches may not be appropriate for disinfection, such as those intended for healthy use on colored garments or for whitening.

When properly diluted, unexpired household bleach will become effective against coronaviruses. Do not combine the bleach or other cleansers with ammonia.

The contact time of the solution should be at least 1 minute.

Steps for making a bleach solution. Mix the following:

Tablespoons bleach per gallon of water OR 4 teaspoons bleach per quarter of water.

Bleach solution provides disinfection for up to 24 hours. Alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol may also be used [10].

#### Soft surfaces

1. For soft surfaces such as carpeted floor, drapes and rugs:
2. Soap and water or appropriate cleansing agent should be used.
3. Use warm water up to maximum permissible limit and items should be thoroughly dried. Manufacturer's instructions should be followed.

#### Electronics

1. Wipeable cover should be used over electronics
2. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for use.
3. Alcohol-based wipes or at least 70 % alcohol containing sprays can be used and surface should be dried completely [12].

#### Laundry

1. For towels, linen, clothing and other items.
2. Use warm water up to maximum permissible limit and items should be thoroughly dried. Manufacturer's instructions should be followed.
3. Disposable gloves should be used while laundering linen of a sick patient.
4. Dirty laundry from a person who is sick can be washed with other people's items.
5. Dirty laundry should not be shaken.
6. Wash hands after every laundry.

### Cleaning and disinfecting outdoor areas

1. Outdoor areas like parks and playgrounds need normal cleaning but there is no need or indication of disinfection.
2. Routine cleaning of surfaces which are most frequently touched should be done. There is no need to clean and disinfect grounds or wooden [10].
3. Roads and sidewalks do not need disinfection.

### When cleaning

1. Appropriate training
2. Professional cleaning workers can clean and disinfect spaces within the group. Ensure they are trained on the proper use of chemicals for cleaning and disinfection.
3. For all activities in the cleaning process, wear disposable gloves and gowns like handling garbage.
4. Depending on the cleaning / disinfectant products being used and if there is a chance of splash, additional personal protective equipment (PPE) may be needed. Gloves and gowns should be carefully removed to avoid contamination of both the wearer and the surrounding environment.
5. Clean your hands for 20 seconds always with soap and water.
6. Always wash immediately after removing gloves and coming in touch with a sick person.

### Hand sanitizer

If soap and water are not available and hands are not clearly dirty, a hand sanitizer based on alcohol can be used which contains at least 60 percent alcohol. If hands are clearly dirty however, wash hands with soap and water at all times.

### Additional key times to wash hands include

- After coughing, sneezing or blowing nose
- After every restroom use
- Prior to eating or cooking food
- After pet handling
- Before and after giving regular treatment to someone else who needs assistance.

### Additional considerations for employers

- Educate the workers to understand the COVID-19 signs and symptoms.
- Provide instructions on what to do if symptoms occur within 14 days of their final potential exposure to the virus.
- Establish workers safety policies and provide on-site training for all cleaning staff before conducting cleaning tasks.
- Training should include when to use PPE, what PPE is necessary, how to properly don, use, and doff PPE and how to properly dispose of PPE. [13].

### Social responsibilities during COVID-19 outbreak

Much of the discussion regarding social responsibility for health in bioethics and public policy has centered on the duty of society to have access to healthcare. Although providing access to healthcare is an essential social obligation, communities may promote health in many other ways, including through sanitation, pollution control, food and drug protection, health education, disease prevention, urban planning and occupational health. Health promotion approaches other than access to health care, such as research into the environment and public safety and wellness, should be given greater consideration. [14].

Over the longer term, COVID-19 pandemic will create new criteria for steps which society is willing to take to prevent disease spread. Increased social responsibility might be the answer for the diseases and pandemics that could happen in the immediate future. That individual as an individual and as a part of society should work together and join hands to reduce any pandemic causing losses and sufferings.

It makes economic and scientific sense to keep individuals morally accountable for their health-related decisions, considering the well-documented relationship between lifestyle, disease burden and cost of healthcare. While this view has a great deal of intuitive appeal, it also faces numerous objections [15,16,17].

Firstly, holding individuals fully responsible for their own health conflicts with the obligation of medicine to treat the sick and the obligation of society to look after vulnerable people. [15] Second, keeping individuals responsible for their own wellbeing is unreasonable if they can not make rational health-related decisions because of ignorance, mental failure, addictive habits, or societal pressures. [16]. Thirdly, a program that holds individuals accountable for their own wellbeing will be exceedingly difficult to enforce, because illnesses and disorders arise from a complex interplay of genetic and environmental factors [17].

Although individuals should play an important role in maintaining their own wellbeing, they should not be held solely accountable for that. Given that responsibility for health lies either with individuals or with society, it follows that society should also contribute to health promotion and disease prevention [15]; Ensuring access to health services is an important aspect of social responsibility, but other than that community should encourage health through sanitation, pollution control, food and drug protection, public education, disease prevention, urban planning, and occupational health.

The current epidemic of COVID-19 has made people aware that it is not only about vaccination as a preventive measure for disease, but about health awareness, social distancing practices, lockdowns that have occurred, public behaviour of people and the degree of information about the disease has been very helpful in curbing the spread of the disease relative to other western countries in India. In India, the current scenario is a multisectoral partnership in which various levels of the economy work together to create an atmosphere conducive to health promotion and to stay safe.

### Social responsibilities include

- Work from home and avoid crowds and gatherings where there will be more than 5 people present
- Home policies should adhere to the work of employers and governments
- Avoid any form of social gatherings
- Achieve social distance-Maintain at least 2 meters away from others if outdoors
- Use of hand sanitizers and alcoholic disinfection agents
- Health education through proper media outlets, such as radio, news channels and internal channels

### Access to care

**1) Primary care:** All primary care facilities should be functional with appropriate patient screening and case detection through the screening of the throat swab of all suspicious patients with or without symptoms or those with travel history or near interaction with a positive patient.

**2) Medical equipment:** The normal and suspected patients will have different medical devices, Every medical device after use should be sanitized according to standard protocols, which should be done with minimal handling by dedicated staff.

**3) Disaster preparedness:** Each hospital will have a dedicated team of disaster preparedness staff and services. Such workers will undergo intensive instruction on prevention techniques and cope with pandemic outcomes.

**Health research policies**

**Personal hygiene**

1. Health safety devices to be used by all people, including physicians, paramedics and sanitation staff, who are exposed to patients or deal with patient handling.
2. Health Personnel Security

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