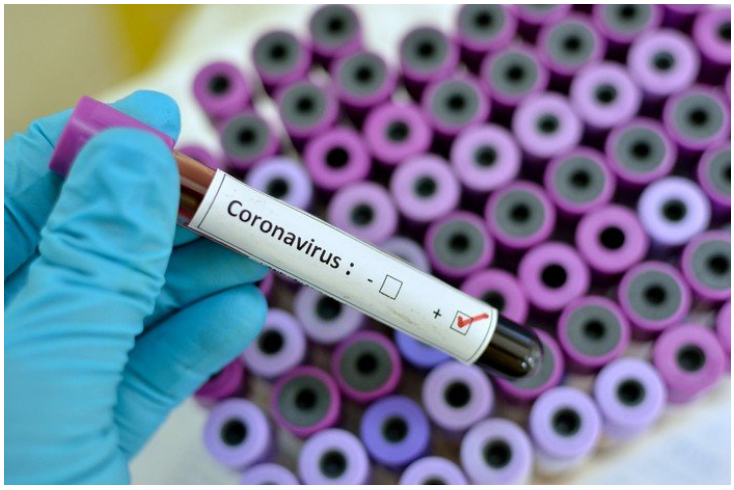
BioSpectrum
the business of Bi
24 years of leveraging the business of Bio
www.biospectrumindia.co

Busting myths and taking precautions imperative to ward off the new coronavirus

12 March 2020 | News

People with low immunity including children, those with pre-existing health problems, elderly and pregnant women must take more care



According to recent updates issued by the WHO, the new coronavirus (2019-nCoV) can infect people of all ages. The elderly and those with certain pre-existing medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, and heart disease seem to be more vulnerable to its severity. While there is no treatment available for the condition, there is a need to raise awareness on taking precautions. People across all age groups must follow good hand and respiratory hygiene to avoid a possible infection.

The number of people affected by the new coronavirus currently stands at over a lakh around the world. About 3000 people have lost their lives due to the infection and over 5000 are critical. The outbreak began in a province of China and was declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January 2020.

Speaking about this, Dr K K Aggarwal, President, Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Confederation of Medical Associations of Asia and Oceania (CMAAO), said, “To tackle any disease or infection, it is imperative to dispel myths associated with it. There are certain misconceptions surrounding the new coronavirus as well. I urge people to only get their information from reliable sources and not rely on forwarded messages or any remedies propagated via social media channels. They must stay informed and undertake hygienic practices including washing their hands with soap and water regularly; avoiding touching face, nose, eyes, etc., with unclean hands; avoiding contact with people who are sick; and staying on self-quarantine in case they experience even mild symptoms.”

Adding further, Dr Vishal Sehgal, Medical Director, Portea Medical, said, “India’s massive population of senior citizens with waning immunity is highly vulnerable to viral infections like the new coronavirus. They should thus be constantly monitored and any variations in their health condition or appearance of symptoms of flu or pneumonia should be taken very seriously. As a leading healthcare company catering to the elderly, we recommend immediate expert medical attention in such cases. Timely administration of expert medication greatly improves the survival chances of the patients. Sanitation and hygiene at home must be doubly ensured and frequency of home cleaning/handwashing is highly recommended. The elderly should avoid going outdoors specially to crowded places or commuting in public transport for the time being.”

Few case reports from China indicate that the coronavirus may have adverse effects on newborns, and cause issues such as preterm labor, fetal distress, etc. Although significant risk has not be reported, it is important for pregnant women to avoid travel or coming into contact with an infected person.

Dheeraj Jain, Founder, Redcliffe Life Sciences said, “Pregnant women must be extra attentive towards preventing coronavirus infection since the chances of complications are more if they get infected. Expectant mothers must follow all the WHO recommendations such as frequent washing of hands, maintaining utmost sanitation, using alcohol-based hand sanitizers, keeping distance from anyone showing signs of flu or other such infections etc. They should avoid visiting public places and choose to work from home if they experience any sickness or fevers. These standard precautions and an enhanced focus on hygiene can help reduce their risk.”

Since the new coronavirus is a respiratory infection, it puts people with heart diseases also at greater risk. “Make sure to notice any unusual signs and symptoms and get checked immediately in case they prolong. Those with heart diseases must constantly monitor themselves at home using pocket-sized devices that are available today. Apart from this, basic preventive measures must be taken including washing hands frequently and avoiding touching possibly contaminated surfaces, etc. Maintain a safe distance from anyone with symptoms of flu or other viral infections especially if you have a heart disease, added, Neha Rastogi, Founder and COO, Agatsa.

So far, conventional medicine has not been able to find a solution to the virus. Viral infections unlike bacterial infections can’t be cured with a simple dose of antibiotics. According to Sarvesh Shashi, Founder, SARVA Yoga, “The best thing to do right now is to prevent the infection by using masks, sanitizers and being fit and healthy. Research shows that the coronavirus poses a bigger threat to people with a low immune system. In such a scenario yoga can certainly come to the rescue. While it can’t prevent you from being infected nor is it a cure, some Asanas, if practiced correctly and regularly can aid in building a robust immune system. These include Matyasana, Utkatasana, Uttanasana, Vrikshasanaand, Halasana and others.”

General precautionary measures everyone should follow

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.