

GUIDELINES FOR HALLS OF RESIDENCES AMID RISE IN COVID 19

For the last few weeks we are seeing an increasing trend in the number of COVID 19 cases on the campus. Last few days have seen a sudden surge in cases, especially among the student community in the halls of residences. With a large number of students coming back to the campus in the last week, the chance of spread of infection is even more if precautions are not followed to the tee. All the precautions that need to be followed have been advertised time and again by various sources for the last one and half years and it is expected that each and every one of us knows them by heart by now. The prudent thing to do is to implement those in practice in day to day life. Since we are already having cases in the halls the following may be practiced in the halls once cases are detected-

1. First and foremost thing to do is self-isolation. For those students staying in single rooms, it is an easy thing to do. For those sharing rooms, some arrangements may be made on part of the hostel administration to isolate them, if possible.
2. The hall council is requested to “track” the cases and their contacts (any travel history, date of onset of symptoms etc).
3. COVID 19 takes a few days of time to reach a detectable stage (either by RAT or RT PCR). Hurrying to get tested, results in missed diagnoses and wastage of resources. We, at BCRTH, keep track of incidences of cases at halls and shall inform as to when mass testing, if any, is required at a particular hall, in consultation with warden and hall council members. The students are requested not to get worked up regarding mass testing for every new case detected.
4. The main symptom of COVID 19 is fever, followed by cough. It is better to remember that sneezing, running nose are NOT features of COVID 19 per se. Any one who is said to be symptomatic, should have a combination of fever, cough, sore throat, diarrhea and loss of smell/taste.
5. The close contacts who are in isolation need to identify onset of symptoms and report them to BCRTH for necessary action.

6. The definition of contact is “being in proximity of a COVID-positive person (distance of < 6 feet) for more than 15 minutes without adequate personal protective gear (properly worn mask). So, all persons who are being labeled as “contacts” are not true contacts.
7. Deep surface sanitization has been proved to have limited value. Sanitization of commonly used areas (like common room, dining halls etc) is ok but sanitization of entire blocks of a hall is an unnecessary step. Repeated washing of hands after using common areas or touching commonly used surfaces (like wash basin etc) is a much more prudent course of action than sanitizing the basin.
8. The importance of the essential measures, iterated time and again (proper wearing of a mask, frequent hand sanitization and maintaining social distancing) cannot be overstated. It is how we, healthcare workers keep ourselves safe even when we see COVID 19 patients regularly. There is no point in quarantining new arrivals, if they are enjoying dinner with many friends in the same room.
9. Regular testing of COVID 19 has been conducted at BCRTTH for the past close to two years. Testing is done in the morning (10.30 am onwards) from Monday- Saturday. In case anyone develops indicative symptoms, please remember that testing shall be done at the earliest possible opportunity. Testing a few hours earlier doesn’t confer any advantage over testing at the usual time. The hall council may please keep in touch with BCRTTH for arranging testing.
10. Finally, it is imperative to remember that none of us are invincible (even with 2 doses of vaccine). This disease can affect any of us at any time, especially if we are casual regarding the safety precautions. With omicron variant spreading in India faster than previously expected, it is even more reason to stick to the rules at all times. Yet, it is also true that most of the vaccinated individuals have had mild diseases till now. So, the last thing to say is that – “DO NOT PANIC. IT DOESN’T SERVE ANY PURPOSE.”