

COVID-19 Management --- Zoom Session with Dr Devashish Saini (Alumnus of AIIMS Delhi (Family Medicine Specialist, founder of Ross Clinic) moderated by Dr. Deepak Sarin (Associate Director, Head and Neck Oncology, Cancer Institute, Medanta) 23/4/21

In the current wave of COVID-19, a large number of Nirvana Country residents have Covid+ friends or family. Most of these patients are initially managed at home. In order to help residents better understand and cope with this, NRWA arranged a Zoom meeting with Dr Devashish Saini. We are sharing now the meeting's transcribed record. We hope that the meeting has helped allay many fears and provided us clear guidelines for home management of COVID-19.

Overview

1. Current wave is cause for anxiety but it will subside in 2 months, as do most epidemic waves.
2. Since Covid19 spreads through droplets in the air, we must protect ourselves and others by wearing a mask when in outdoor public spaces, and maintaining a distance of 2m/6ft.
3. Even a distance of 2m/6 ft may be inadequate in indoor spaces where air is not freely circulating. Therefore, as far as possible, avoid/minimise contact in indoor spaces with people other than your family. If it cannot be avoided, minimise the duration of contact.
4. The common symptoms of Covid19 are cough, cold, fever and sometimes, diarrhea and loss of smell.
5. When you see any of these symptoms, Isolate yourself so that contact with others including family members is minimised. Get a Rapid Antigen Test. If it is positive, then you have COVID. If it is negative, then get a RT-PCT test. The RT-PCT test has a higher detection power for COVID. If the RT-PCR test is positive, continue the treatment including gargling, steam inhalation, keeping yourself hydrated etc as you would for a common cold. Monitor your oxygen saturation level (SpO₂).
6. If SpO₂ falls below 94%, consult a doctor and begin looking for a hospital. At this level you need supplemental oxygen. The doctor may prescribe medicines to combat the desaturation. What you can

also do is to lie in the prone position (on your stomach) and breathe. This is to improve lung function. Keep monitoring your SpO2. Measure your SpO2 after walking for 6 minutes. If below 94, intensify your search for a hospital while continuing to follow your doctor's advice.

Answers to Questions

1. Yes, we must wear a mask while walking in a park. Droplets exhaled by a person who is talking or coughing or sneezing can be the source of infection. This does not mean that we remain indoors. Physical activity is important for our health, including emotional health. Continue outdoor exercise, but wear a mask and keep a safe distance.
2. There is no clear evidence that Covid 19 is spread through contact with infected surfaces but it is still advisable to disinfect surfaces/objects that may have been touched recently by a covid+ person especially when they have sneezed or coughed into their hands
3. Household waste from a covid+ home, if lying outdoors for some time, is not too big a risk if the garbage bags are tightly tied since viruses do not survive for long outside the human body.
4. we are seeing more cases now, including more cases needing hospitalisation because viruses keep mutating and the current strain probably has more transmissibility than the earlier versions. Since it can spread more easily, more and more people are getting affected. As the baseline number increases, the total number of people needing hospitalisation is also increasing. That is why hospitals are now creating facilities in collaboration with hotels where patients who are stable can be kept under observation, freeing up hospital beds for patients with severe symptoms. There is no evidence yet that the current strains cause more severe disease.
5. Virus shedding by an infected person has greatly fallen by day 7 from onset of symptoms and is almost zero by Day 9 so strict isolation is for a period of 10 days from onset of symptoms. For the next 7 days, the patient can mingle with his family unless there is

an elderly family member or other high risk family member. So the total period of isolation is 17 days from onset of symptoms or 14 days from date of test.

6. When the 17 day period of isolation ends, the RT-PCR test does not have to be repeated if it was mild Covid, unless a negative test report is needed for travel and reporting for work. The RT-PCR test may remain positive for many weeks, but this is a dead virus being shed which is non-infective.
7. Because we are in the middle of a major wave, building immunity early is important. The second dose of the vaccine (whether Covishield or Covaxin) should be taken as quickly as possible after four weeks from the date of the first dose. The added advantage that a longer gap between doses gives is not so significant that we should delay getting the second dose. Since transmissibility is so high, it is better to get protection as quickly as possible to tide over this wave safely.
8. If you become Covid+ after the first dose of Covid vaccine, then get the second dose 6 weeks after you recover from Covid19.
9. When you get vaccinated, there is no mechanism by which the vaccine virus can replicate and cause Covid19. The immunity takes two weeks to develop after vaccination so you are still vulnerable in this period. If you develop symptoms a few days later after your shot and your RT-PCR test is positive, it means that you have been infected (called a breakthrough infection). This can happen 5 to 7 days after you get vaccinated. There is a chance to get exposed during vaccination especially if it was an indoor, crowded venue and you had to wait for some time before you got your shot. If possible, get your vaccine at a venue where the crowd is sparse and you do not have to wait long.
10. Most of us do not need to stock oxygen concentrators/cylinders at home. If symptoms are mild/moderate and the person is otherwise healthy, they may not desaturate and if they do, they can use prone breathing (breathing while lying on your stomach) to improve oxygen saturation. There is a shortage of oxygen for those who need it. We should not make the situation worse by stocking

oxygen. However, if there are high risk or elderly persons at home, it may be useful to have an oxygen cylinder to tide over the time between fall in SpO₂ and admission into a hospital.

11. Outdoors, the virus travels as an aerosol upto 6 ft , hence the advice to maintain a distance of 6 feet. Indoors, even a 6 ft distance may not suffice. For example, air conditioning units circulate the air in the room, including the infected aerosols. It is best to not have any contact or only minimum contact indoors with people other than your family. Speaking, talking and singing cause dispersal of aerosol to greater distances.
12. If you are Covid+ but also have a chronic disease , then follow the same advice (treating it as if it were a common cold) but intensify monitoring. Also, fluid intake should be as per medical advice specially for patients with kidney disease and heart failure. Keep checking oxygen saturation and immediately consult a doctor if the SpO₂ level falls below 94%.
13. Those on blood thinners are advised to stop the blood thinner 3 or 4 days before the Covid vaccination so that hematomas do not form. However, in some people stopping blood thinners even for a small period may carry additional risk, so best to check with the prescribing doctor before doing so. Low-dose aspirin does not need to be stopped for vaccination. If the exact date of vaccination cannot be predicted (short supply etc) then continue taking the blood thinner and press down for 30 minutes at the injection site so that a hematoma does not form.
14. Diagnosing a low grade fever is always a challenge. Usually, it is attributable to the most common cause at that point of time. Right now, the most common cause is Covid19 so if you have low grade fever , consider yourself Covid+ even if there are no other symptoms. Start isolation and get tested.
15. If you have recovered from Covid+ but continue to have low grade fever for several months after, consult a doctor. If other causes are ruled out, then it may be what is being called Long Covid, the main symptom of which is fatigue. Take all those measures which you would to increase general well being. This

includes physical exercise which will increase your sense of well being and energy level.

16. Even if you have isolated yourself for several months and plan to continue the isolation, it is best to take the Covid vaccine as early as possible. You never know when you have to leave the house in an emergency. Get the shot at a venue which is not crowded and where you do not have to wait too long. Life is unpredictable and may throw up circumstances in which you cannot remain isolated.
17. Children are not more vulnerable than before to the current Covid 19 virus strain. The possibility of complications in healthy children is very, very low. Nevertheless, please observe all the usual precautions to keep them protected.
18. If a child does get Covid 19, there are no tests to assess whether, after recovery, the child has suffered any long term systemic consequences. Therefore, no special tests are required when quarantine ends. Focus on restoration of the child's general well being.
19. If you are symptomatic but the Rapid Antigen Test is negative, isolate yourself and begin treatment as for a common cough/cold. Get an RT-PCR test. If this too is negative but symptoms continue, the presumption remains that you are Covid+. Some patients with COVID will have a negative PCR test repeatedly. Continue the isolation + treatment, including monitoring of oxygen saturation with a pulse oximeter. This is because even the RT-PCR test does not have 100 % sensitivity.
20. If you have no symptoms of COVID other than breathlessness and tightness in the chest, consult a doctor. The symptoms could be due to Covid19. But equally likely is that other causes like anxiety or seasonal allergy or more serious things like heart disease can cause this. Keep monitoring your oxygen saturation level, and do consult a doctor.
21. Even for elderly patients, if a Covid+ person is otherwise stable and oxygen saturation is OK, there is no need to get a CT scan done. Almost every one with Covid19 will have slight pneumonia

which the CT scan could reveal but if otherwise stable, treatment is not needed . So, avoid CT scans if the patient is stable.

22. There is no evidence that air purifiers filter out the Covid virus. If in the same room as a Covid19 patient, do not rely upon air purifiers to protect you. Use all other precautions , including appropriate distance, mask etc.
23. If your oxygen saturation level has fallen below 94 but a hospital bed is not immediately available, practice prone breathing to improve oxygenation. Your doctor may also prescribe steroids and nebulisation.
24. Covid19 symptoms take 7 days to go away. If the cough continues and is accompanied by tightness in chest, difficulty in breathing, headache, consult your doctor.
25. Here is what you must monitor if you are Covid+ ----- (1) Oxygen level --- cause for concern only if below 94% on repeated readings(2) difficulty in breathing, breathlessness (3) Dizziness, weakness (4) persistent high grade fever beyond 5-7 days. If you have diarrhea as one of the symptoms, the dizziness could be due to dehydration so remember to take ORS.

IMPORTANT : Please note that this session and its related material like FAQs and Videos are only for general awareness and guidance. Before taking any steps or implementing the suggestions, you must consult a qualified medical practitioner.
