

PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF COVID19



(AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM)



Why should a Viral Pandemic have Psychological effects?



- The novel COVID-19 is quite contagious, and has a small but significant mortality.
- At present, no specific treatment or vaccine is available.
- India is still at the stage of limited community spread and there is no idea how this pandemic will unfold.
- There is considerable apprehension about future.



- It is a period of global uncertainty, and for several reasons, can be stressful for many, including:
 1. due to social isolation, lockdown and financial insecurity.
 2. the psychological response to diagnosis of COVID19.
 3. public responses to those with symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 infection.



- When under Stress, one may experience a wide range of emotions and responses.
- Also, people with pre-existing Psychiatric illnesses can experience worsening of their symptoms.
- At *High Risk* are Children, Elderly, Pregnant women, People with pre-existing mental illness, People living alone and Families of those who have COVID19.

What is our Psychological response to Covid19?



Common psychological and behavioral responses include:

- Increased anxiety or fears related to health of self or loved ones
- Low or irritable mood
- Anger, increased conflicts with family
- Increased use of alcohol and tobacco
- Inability to sleep
- Concentration difficulties
- Excessive worrying



- For most, these symptoms are mild and transitory, but a minority may develop severe mental health issues that require additional mental health support.

What helps?



- Staying updated with latest information, from reliable sources.
- Limiting exposure to media platforms.
- Acknowledging and identifying the stress responses such as insomnia, concentration problems, bodily symptoms, increased use of alcohol or tobacco etc.
- If symptoms become persistent or severe or cause significant dysfunction, seeking professional help.

Fighting pandemic in the mind

During a pandemic, such as the current coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, the mind gets affected as much as the body. Here are a few ways to deal with the psychological impact:



Seek information from trusted sources like WHO, govt health media



Minimise reading or watching news related to the pandemic



Reach out to friends, relatives digitally and stay connected



Treat patients with compassion; avoid terming them cases or racial profiling



Support healthcare workers, personnel involved in essentials supply



Avoid resorting to alcohol, tobacco or drug abuse



Religion can help, but avoid risky practices due to blind faith



Seek help from a mental health specialist. It's OK to feel not OK

Do's



- Sleeping right
- Eating right
- Having a structured daily routine.
- Daily charting if on medications.
- Leisure activities
- Spiritual practices
- Regular indoor exercise and yoga
- Staying in touch with family and relatives.
- Practice deep breathing, muscle relaxation or meditation.
- Academic activities

DON'TS



- Use of alcohol or tobacco as a means to cope with stress.
- Chaotic routine and sleep wake cycle.
- Excessive social media exposure.
- Excessive news consumption.
- Going out, unless essential.

Strategies for stress management



- Plan and prepare ahead (e.g. ensuring medicine supplies for chronic health condition, spending prudently etc.)
- Embrace preventive measures (e.g. social distancing, hand hygiene) as part of new lifestyle.
- Maintain sleep-wake schedule, with regular nutritious meals.
- Engage in daily physical exercise, depending on one's fitness level and stamina.

What if you experience severe problems?



- Psychological presentations during COVID-19 are common. Early intervention is important.
- Patients with pre-existing conditions such as Anxiety, Depression, OCD, Psychosis or Substance Abuse may be particularly vulnerable during the pandemic.
- A proportion of previously healthy individuals will go on to develop disorders, such as Depression, Anxiety, or Trauma-related disorders.



- Such individuals may require formal treatment, either in a conventional (OPD/IPD) setting or Telemedicine.
- Mental health experts are available in St. Stephen's Hospital, at all times.
- For patients with high risk symptoms such as Suicidal thoughts or unprovoked aggression, Emergency help should be sought promptly.

How to seek help?



- **For further information/enquiries/help, Contact**
OPD no 124/131,
Department of Psychiatry,
St. Stephen's Hospital, Tis Hazari
- **For Helpline Services, Contact**
Dr. Rupali Shivalkar – 9650615777
Dr. Atmesh Kumar - 9910418811
Mrs. Sanjeeta Prasad- 9810979487
- **For Emergency Services, Contact Emergency Department, St. Stephen's Hospital.**