

Lung Patients to Practice Social Shielding to Tackle Coronavirus

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Doctors in Hong Kong have found that some patients might have a drop of 20 to 30% in lung function even after full recovery from the novel coronavirus. They can be left with substantially weakened lung capacity making them gasp for air when walking quickly. Researchers in Britain's University College London analyzed studies of COVID-19 patients from China and found that COPD patients were 6.4 times more likely to develop severe disease, and 17.8 times more likely to be admitted to intensive care. Amidst the 'accelerating' Coronavirus outbreak where the World has already taken measures of Social distancing and Self isolation to prevent further spread, we should now urge patients into Social Shielding.

What is social shielding?

Shielding is a practice used to protect extremely vulnerable people (because of their existing health conditions) from social contact for 12 weeks by staying at home.

Who should be shielded?

- Patients with impaired or compromised lung conditions (e.g., COPD, Asthma, ILD, Bronchiectasis, lung cancer, Cystic Fibrosis, Pulmonary Hypertension, Sarcoidosis etc).
- Transplant patients.
- Cancer patients.
- Patients on Immunosuppressive medicine (Prednisolone, Methotrexate, Azathioprine, Cyclosporine, Sirolimus, tacrolimus, received intravenous Cyclophosphamide, Rituximab or Infliximab in last 6 months).
- Patients who are elderly or have other comorbid conditions like diabetes, hypertension are at higher risk for more severe disease.

How to practice social shielding?

- Avoid: Avoid leaving your house.
- Avoid attending any gatherings.
- Avoid shopping or travelling and, when arranging food or medication deliveries, these should be left at the door to minimize contact.

- Avoid visiting clinics and hospitals (prefer Tele-consultation or tele-rehabilitation or Call the doctor home).
- Avoid Visitors.

Educate: Clinicians should educate the practice:

- Hand washing with soap and water often for at least 20 seconds or using a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol
Avoid touching eyes/nose/mouth.
- Coughing etiquette's (cough or sneeze on tissue paper or corner of elbow) Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Knowing the difference between Coronavirus and Exacerbation (flare-up) of your condition. Typically exacerbations of COPD and asthma are not associated with a high fever whereas signs of COVID-19 include a high temperature and a new continuous cough.

Practice healthy lifestyle to avoid corona virus

1. **Exercise:** Following a regular schedule of Deep Breathing, Yoga, Aerobic and strengthening exercises at home. Try pulmonary exercise videos that are available online.
2. **Diet:** Follow immunity boosting diet which can consist of Vitamin C enriched food, Ginger tea, Turmeric milk, good protein and antioxidants food as permitted. Zinc, Vitamin D3 and Calcium supplements would further benefit.
3. **Fluid:** Fluid intake should be around 2 - 3 liters minimum unless restricted. Prefer having hot beverages over cold. Consuming hot/warm water would further benefit.
4. **Sleep:** A good quality sleep of 8 - 10 hrs would further boost immunity.
5. **Gargle and steam inhalation:** Hot water preferably salt water gargling would keep throat infections away and steam inhalation will keep the nasal passages clear. There is no evidence that gargling and steam inhalation would kill coronavirus but it will keep other respiratory infections away.
6. **Smoking and alcohol:** People who smoke are five times more likely to get flu and twice as likely to get pneumonia. Quitting smoking is one of the best ways to protect yourself from viral infections, including coronavirus.
7. **Stress:** Staying at home can be frustrating and boring and may further increase your stress levels. Try these simple things to stay active:
 - a. Spend time doing things you enjoy. This could be reading, cooking or listening to the radio or watching TV (positive and funny shows or movies).
 - b. Practice meditation.
 - c. Pick up a new hobby.
 - d. Keep your windows open to let in fresh air, get some natural sunlight if you can.

8. **Air purifiers:** Most commercially available air purifiers are high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters. They can remove many particles from the air, but coronavirus is too small to be affected. It won't hurt to have air purifier but won't help kill the coronavirus either.
9. **Air condition:** Home AC units do not pose any additional risk of Covid-19 infection when people are isolated and where no one is infected. However, coronavirus can spread within spaces that are centrally air conditioned (shopping malls and some modern apartments) especially if an infected person is inside such spaces.

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