

KNOWLEDGE NOT FEAR



COVID-19

WHAT IS COVID-19 (NOVEL CORONAVIRUS)

COVID-19 is a new viral infection caused by the virus SARS-CoV-2. It is in the same class of viruses that can cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases.

This virus has the potential to infect millions of people across the globe. Though it has been determined that the virus can spread from person to person, the full extent of how this happens is not yet completely understood.

It is known that it can take up to 14 days for a person infected with the virus to show symptoms.

CREATING HEALTHY AND SAFE SPACES

Health professionals agree that one of the most significant ways that a virus can spread is by touching a contaminated surface then touching a clean surface. That surface is now contaminated and someone else touches it and goes on to touch other clean surfaces. Viruses can survive on hard surfaces for hours or days. A person can become ill without coming into contact with other people by touching a contaminated surface then touching their face.⁽ⁱ⁾

One of the most important ways of breaking this cycle is by using the proper hand washing technique with soap and water. The World Health Organization (WHO) has a video that shows how to do this to remove the virus from the hands. This technique is also effective with the seasonal flu virus and bacteria. When soap and water is not readily available, this technique can be used with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. The sanitizer needs to have at least 60 per cent alcohol to be effective.

Jewellery on the hands and wrist provide additional surface area for the virus and can be difficult to keep clean. Consider removing this jewellery for the duration of the pandemic.

You should be practicing prevention measures for this virus and every flu season. Prevention measures include:

- » **Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.**
- » **Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.**
- » **Avoid close contact with people who are ill.**
- » **Maintain a distance of 6 feet (2m) from others when out in public.**
- » **Stay home when you are ill.**
- » **Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then immediately throw the tissue in the garbage and wash your hands.**
- » **If you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your sleeve or arm.**
- » **Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.**

FACE MASKS

The fear of this new virus has resulted in a run on surgical masks and N-95 respirators in stores and pharmacies. It is important to understand the difference. Surgical masks sometimes called medical masks were developed many years ago because scientists realised that doctors performing surgery could cause infections just by breathing over a patient. We know now that when we exhale or speak, fine droplets are released into the surrounding air. These droplets contain many viruses and bacteria that exist in our respiratory system. The surgical masks help to reduce the spread of these. They provide very little in the way of protection from an airborne virus for those wearing the mask.

If you are sick you can wear a surgical mask to reduce the chances that you will pass on your illness to others in your home. Do not wear one to work or out in public. If you are sick, Stay Home. Your co-workers do not want your germs and neither do the people in the checkout line at the grocery store or those sitting next to you on public transit. This is how an epidemic spreads.

Respirators are distinct from surgical masks as they are engineered to provide protection from small airborne particulates including the fine droplets that may contain viruses. The N-95 respirator is the minimum that should be provided to protect workers. The respirator is not a one-size fits all. One that fits the average male will not properly fit a petite female. Workers must be assessed and the appropriate size respirator provided. Respirators must be fit-tested to ensure a proper seal is maintained. They are intended for single use and disposable. Reusing a respirator can result in contamination inside the respirator. In addition, they have expiry dates because the components of a respirator can breakdown over time. The bottom line is that it is not as simple as slapping on a respirator. Leave the respirators for the health care workers and other emergency workers.

Canada's chief public health officer recently announced people can consider wearing non-medical or homemade masks if they are in situations where they cannot avoid close contact with people. This was offered as advice, not a recommendation.

SURGICAL GLOVES

Surgical gloves is another product people have run out to purchase. Human skin is very good at keeping virus and bacteria out of the body. The corona virus will not travel through the skin. These gloves have a specific purpose for medical professionals and emergency service workers. They are intended for short-term single-use and disposed of following the medical procedure.

The main method of contamination from the hands is by touching the face, especially the eyes, nose and mouth. One study found that people touch their own face an average of 23 times per hour.⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ Gloves can give people a false belief that they are protected and do not need to wash their hands as often. Frequent hand washing is the best protection people can do for themselves. Leave the gloves for the health care workers and other emergency workers.

⁽ⁱ⁾ youtu.be/o9hjmques72I

⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25637115

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