

IS THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE PANDEMIC?

Be Aware and prepare yourself, But Don't Panic!

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MICROBES or microorganisms are tiny living things found all around us and cannot be seen by the naked eyes. Human body is a Home of Billions of microbes namely bacteria, fungi, protozoan and viruses. Many microbes are vital and essential for human health however, some bacteria and viruses cause harmful effects on the health of human beings.

BACTERIA are single celled organisms, naturally found in human body. Most of the bacteria are harmless and in fact, help us digest food, protect us against other bacteria and provide nutrients for our body. Less than 1% of bacteria make us sick. Strep throat, tuberculosis and urinary tract infections are the few infections caused by bacteria. Normally our body's immune system fights against these infections. Drugs such as, antibiotics, creams, injections are available to treat most bacterial infections.

VIRUS is smaller than bacteria. The largest virus is smaller than the smallest bacterium. Viruses need other living organisms for their survival and multiplication. Most viruses cause diseases such as, common cold, Herpes, shingles, chickenpox, AIDS, etc. Antibiotics never cure viral infection however, antiviral or vaccination may only reduce/prevent the growth of virus. Some virus can infect the bacteria in our body.

CORONAVIRUS are a family of viruses that infect human, cat, rat, camel, bat, dog and birds causing respiratory and gastrointestinal diseases. Its name comes from the Latin word 'corona' meaning crown. In humans, there are four types of coronaviruses, generally cause upper respiratory tract infections and are prevalent worldwide. They cause illness starting from common cold to more severe diseases such as, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) & the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). However, the present infection worldwide is due to a novel coronavirus transmitted human-human.

ORIGIN: Several known coronaviruses are found in animals. Only a very few coronaviruses are originally transmitted from animals to people. For example: SARS virus was transmitted from cats to humans while MERS virus moved from camel to humans. Currently Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2) called as a novel virus causes Coronavirus Disease 2019 known as COVID-19. This virus was initially transmitted from bats / pangolins to human in China. COVID-19 causes the respiratory tract disease in people. Be aware, but do not panic. Each one needs to prepare oneself to overcome the coronavirus infection. COVID-19 is pandemic but not an epidemic. Pandemic means the

worldwide spread of a new disease, whereas epidemic means the spread of a disease in a community at a particular time.

IMPACT OF COVID-19: As on April 02, 2020, there are 9,36,958 coronavirus cases (1,94,665 recovered & 47,264 deaths) at global level. In India there are 1,649 coronavirus cases (143 recovered & 41 deaths). There are 234 confirmed cases (6 recovered & 1 death) in Tamil Nadu.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU HAVE SYMPTOMS: You should contact your family doctor immediately and share your symptoms over phone. Currently the only way to be tested for COVID-19 is to use national or state helpline numbers. Helplines: 1075 / 1800-112-545 / 011-23978046 (*National*); 044-29510500 (*TamilNadu*) and 104 (*Puducherry*)

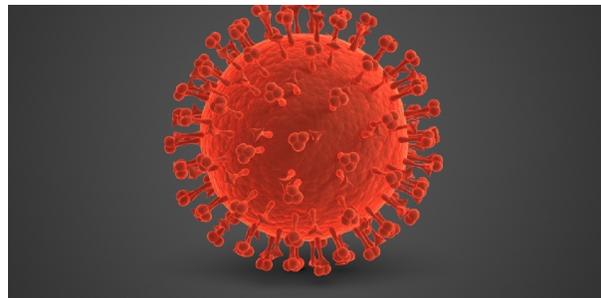
PREVENTION: While the Covid-19 spreads through cough, sneeze, personal contact, contaminated objects and mass gathering, the best ways to protect yourself and others are as follows:

- Wash your hands often for 20 seconds with water/soap/sanitizer (60% alcohol)
- Drink water/liquid every 30 minutes
- Avoid contact with sick people
- Always cover when you cough or sneeze
- Stay home and self-isolate yourself
- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth with uncleaned hands
- Eat nutritious foods

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ORDINARY COUGH AND COVID-19: Cold and cough are generally due to allergic reaction. A fever with cough and running nose is a symptom of the flu. When you have fever with dry cough which may further complicate to having breathing difficulty, can be the symptom of Coronavirus infection.

SYMPTOMS: The symptoms of COVID-19 may start with mild, then to moderate and severe illness. From onset to clinical recovery for mild cases 2-3 weeks, but 4-6 weeks for severe cases. Some of the common symptoms are as follows:

- Dry cough
- High fever
- Sore throat
- Difficulty in breathing
- Headache
- Fatigue



VULNERABLE TO COVID-19: People of all ages may be affected by COVID-19. The elderly people (above 65 years), alcoholic, diabetic person, transplant patient, asthmatic, cardiac patient, immune compromised patient, person with less immunity and children are at the highest risk for severity of infection and dying.

TREATMENT: Currently there is no specific drug for curing the confirmed COVID-19 patients. So far, no specific anti-viral drugs are recommended for this disease. In India, the guidelines of Union Health Ministry have recommended the use of anti-HIV drug combinations viz. Lopinavir and Ritonavir depending upon the severity of the condition of a person affected by coronavirus infection.

CRY OF THE WORLD- A PROACTIVE RESPONSE: As we know very well, the entire human community is seriously challenged by coronavirus. The poor, migrants, street children, refugees, beggars, differently-abled and elders who are the most vulnerable of COVID-19 are suffering a lot every minute as our crucified Lord Jesus suffers. With the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ, we need to involve in healing the wounded world. Holy Boldness and certain apostolic aggressivity are the important dimensions of our loving service to the poor at the midst of helplessness situation. Light shines fully only where there is darkness. We are all the children of God who is the Light of World. With innovative strategies, let us all collectively and individually get involved fully in rebuilding the healthy life of our people who are in need most.