

WEBINAR

Your Covid-19 Questions Answered

🕒 Wednesday, 5th May 2021 | 5.30-7.00 pm IST

ASK THE EXPERTS

PANELISTS

MODERATOR



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Introduction

The current Covid-19 crisis poses a serious public health threat. Swamped with information, often it becomes hard to follow the right advice. Realizing the gravity of the challenges posed by the pandemic, health experts are ensuring they address the apprehensions related to Covid-19!

The following Q&A session from the webinar hosted by **IPE Global** and **LSE Alumni Delhi** along with **MeraDoc**, features the top health experts talk about strategies & best practices in handling the current health crisis and, address queries around vaccination, care and testing.

Panelists

Dr. Harsh Mahajan – President, NATHEALTH & Founder, Mahajan Imaging

Dr. Neeraj Jain – Chairman, Department of Chest Medicine, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital

Dr. Rahul Gupta – Senior Physician

Moderator

Ashwajit Singh – Founder & Managing Director, IPE Global

Q&A

Is the new variant reaching lungs faster?

(Answered by Dr. Neeraj Jain and Dr. Rahul Gupta)

Increased lung damage and the sudden onset of pneumonitis (lung inflammation) have been observed across the world in the new variant of Covid-19.

In the strain seen last year, a patient was getting severely ill after 5 to 7 days. Preliminary symptoms like lack of taste, sore throat or cold were signs which people could act on timely to prevent damage. But, in the new strain the lungs are getting affected very soon and often without warning.

Why is the new variant affecting younger people in the age group of 25 – 45?

(Answered by Dr. Neeraj Jain)

A lot of 60+ age group has already been vaccinated. These young adults are among the last prioritized to get the vaccine and many of them are yet to receive their shots. Besides, this group is more active outside and have a higher exposure to the virus due to social settings. These factors coupled with the highly contagious variant are driving a surge in these young people.

With oxygen crisis these days, what can we do during an emergency at home?

(Answered by Dr. Neeraj Jain and Dr. Rahul Gupta)

SpO2 levels anything between 94 to 100 is considered healthy. Options such as oxygen concentrator, breathing exercises and humming can be useful tools in case the level dips below 94. Lying and breathing in the prone position is also an effective way. Prone is the process of making a patient lie face down, on their abdomen or stomach. It is important to avoid Prone at least for an hour after having a meal. However, if the body experiences discomfort, it is advised to stop the process immediately.

Options of pooling resources for oxygen concentrators, medicines etc. need to be considered at a local level to handle emergencies. In case, there is an oxygen cylinder available at home, use it judiciously and allow time to arrange for alternatives. In the meantime, keep monitoring the oxygen level.

Why is CT scan recommended in the new Covid-19 strain?

(Answered by Dr. Harsh Mahajan)

CT scan has been considered as an effective diagnostic tool for clinically suspected Covid-19 cases. It can potentially spot people who may have tested negative even after RT-PCR. However, if oxygen levels are above 95, there is no need for a CT scan. It is important to not go for a CT scan unless advised by a doctor.

Do we need to stop taking blood thinners for vaccination?

(Answered by Dr. Neeraj Jain)

No, we do not need to stop blood thinners before or after vaccination.

Are the existing vaccines effective against the new Covid variant? Can we get infected after vaccination?

(Answered by Dr. Harsh Mahajan)

Data from vaccine clinical trials and real-world evidence shows that even in the case of new variants, vaccines can drastically cut the risk of severe disease. However, it is only after nearly two weeks of getting a shot that immunity is boosted. Chances of re-infection are there post vaccination but data indicates this percentage is low.

Why are people succumbing to the new variant even after two shots of vaccine?

(Answered by Dr. Rahul Gupta)

No vaccine can ensure 100% efficacy against viral infections. However, in majority of the vaccinated cases, the overall risk is much lower than those who are not vaccinated. A possible reason is that a person may have been infected with the virus just before or after the vaccination and has therefore gotten sick. In such a case, the vaccine would not have gotten enough time to provide protection, as it typically takes about two weeks for the body to build immunity post vaccination.

According to a lancet study there is enough evidence that Covid predominantly spreads thru air? How can we protect ourselves? Is double masking the answer?

(Answered by Dr. Rahul Gupta, Dr. Neeraj Jain, Dr. Harsh Mahajan)

The virus is airborne. Therefore, in the new variant, the aerosols are smaller in size and can travel longer distances. This means that even if someone has sneezed in the room and left, others may get infected. Thus, it is important to keep the room well-ventilated and let fresh air come in.

Referring to masks, it is important to understand what type of mask is effective. N95 (without valve) is hugely effective and can protect well enough but in case one is stepping outside, a surgical mask may be added. However, the key is to ensure that mask is worn properly and covers the nose and mouth tightly.

Can we catch Covid-19 from an asymptomatic person's presence in the same room?

(Answered by Dr. Harsh Mahajan)

That depends on the airflow, ventilation, and air conditioning of the room. If there is a room with are 10-12 people where some may be asymptomatic, the possibility of transmission increases. But, if there are two people and both are masked, the chances of transmission reduce.

Is there a possibility of further mutation of the new variant? We are hearing about yet another triple mutant strain of Covid-19? How is it different from the current double mutant strain?

(Answered by Dr. Harsh Mahajan)

Yes, there is a possibility of more mutations. But with more mutations, even these vaccines will be repurposed to meet the needs of the virus mutation.

What are the common symptoms of this new variant?

(Answered by Dr. Rahul Gupta)

Besides the most common symptoms of Covid-19 like fever, cough, fatigue and loss of sense of smell and taste, some recent symptoms seen in the new variant are redness in eyes, skin rash, diarrhea, and cramps. The warning sign of the new variant can also be severe respiratory complications such as shortness of breath, chest pain and difficulty in breathing, which indicate oxygen deprivation.

How do we manage if there are Covid+ Kids at home?

(Answered by Dr. Rahul Gupta)

There are high chances that children may have also been infected especially when there are nuclear families. In such a situation monitor your child for COVID-19 symptoms. Pay particular attention to:

- Sore throat
- Fever
- Cough that may cause difficulty in breathing (for a child with any previous allergy/asthma trouble, see if there is a change from their usual cough)
- Diarrhea, vomiting, or stomach-ache
- New onset of severe headache, especially with a fever
- Any recent contacts that the child may have had
- Adequate nutrition with multivitamins

Is there soon going to be a third wave which could be as intense as the current 2nd wave?

(Answered by Dr. Harsh Mahajan)

Yes, a third wave is inevitable. It is imperative to vaccinate yourself and keep safe to prevent the surge like 2nd wave.

Why is lung infection being seen in patients without comorbidities?

(Answered by Dr Neeraj Jain)

Unlike the first one, the second wave is seeing the disease become more virulent after the first 4-5 days and in the second week upto two-three weeks there is fever and infection spreads to the lungs and does not respond to the usual treatment. What makes it more dangerous is the highly infectious strain which is airborne. It is transmitted so easily that it is not surprising that number of people has gone up significantly.

How long after testing negative should one wait before getting the vaccine?

(Answered by Dr. Harsh Mahajan)

As per CDC guidelines, one should wait at least 90 days before getting vaccinated post recovery.

When do we go for testing?

(Answered by Dr. Harsh Mahajan)

Incubation period is an average of 5 days. Often people make the mistake of testing immediately and hence the results come negative. If a person comes in contact with a Covid-19 patient, they should get a test done only on the 6th or 7th day in case no visible symptoms show up. However, for symptomatic cases, tests need to be done as soon as initial signs are there.

How are Rapid Antigen tests done? Is it foolproof?

(Answered by Dr. Harsh Mahajan)

Rapid Antigen tests is done on swabbed nasal samples that detects antigens found on or within the SARS-CoV-2 virus. It is a point-of-care test, performed outside the conventional laboratory setting, and is used to quickly obtain a diagnostic result. In case Rapid Antigen test is positive, a person has Covid-19 but, if it is negative, it may be followed by an RT-PCR test for reconfirmation.

At what stage do we panic?

(Answered by Dr. Neeraj Jain)

The panic last year was mainly attributed to the fact that it was a new disease, and most were not aware of, but we coped well. However, this year the virus has hit us hard. It is behaving differently versus to last year:

- There are lot more asymptomatic patients

- It is airborne so spreading like wildfire
- As opposed to last year when the symptoms appear between 2 to 5 days, often it is the 5th to the 14th day that people start becoming sick

To cope up with this situation, one must not panic immediately and take care of the following:

- Record temperature, oxygen level and isolate yourself
- Stay mobile in your isolation space and don't do any strenuous exercise
- Eat meals regularly and don't lie down after meal,
- Walk for 6 minutes at a normal pace in your space and if oxygen level falls below 94, speak to the physician immediately,
- Consult a physician if chest pain occurs even if other parameters are normal
- Take multivitamins for mild symptoms post consultation with your physician.

Can pregnant and lactating mothers get vaccinated?

(Answered by Dr. Harsh Mahajan)

Yes, it is safe for them to get vaccinated.

What is the role of plasma?

(Answered by Dr. Neeraj Jain)

Role of plasma is doubtful. When the immune system is weak, plasma can be given but it has a narrow window. There is no need to rush for plasma immediately as it does not help majority of the patients unless advised by the doctor.

Is it important to test Covid before vaccination?

(Answered by Dr. Harsh Mahajan)

Not necessary unless there are symptoms, or a contact with a Covid-19 positive patient.

What is D – Dimer test? Does D-Dimer Test work in case the RTPCR Test is not available?

(Answered by Dr. Rahul Gupta)

D-Dimer test is like RT-PCR, but it can only be done on doctor's recommendation. A high D-Dimer suggests that such a patient is more prone to clotting and could benefit with oral anticoagulants. The D-Dimer test does not substitute for the RTPCR and a high level does not prove Covid-19 infection.

When should I take my 2nd dose of vaccine if I get infected with Covid after 1st vaccine?

(Answered by Dr. Harsh Mahajan)

As per CDC guidelines, one should wait at least 90 days before getting vaccinated from the date of recovery.

What are the chances of false positive in RTPCR?

(Answered by Dr. Harsh Mahajan)

There is no false positive in RT-PCR. It is a gold standard test with a sensitivity of nearly 70%, so there is a chance for it to be negative. Improper sample collection, transport & storage could be a few reasons for this deviation. However, in such cases immediately isolate yourself, repeat the test after 2-3 days which may then turn positive. The other way to diagnose in the right clinical setting is do a CT scan.

Is Oxygen concentrator of 25Kg with output of 5 litre per minute okay for COVID patient and can it help even if oxygen level is around 70?

(Answered by Dr. Neeraj Jain)

Different models of concentrator work differently. Oxygen concentrators can be used only in moderate cases of Covid-19 when the patient experiences a drop in oxygen levels, where the oxygen requirement is a maximum of 5 litres per minute. Critical patients often require up to 40-50 litres of oxygen per minute which these concentrators cannot provide. In such cases, one would need liquid medical oxygen (LMO) to replenish the body's supply to acceptable clinical levels.

Can we donate plasma without Covid?

(Answered by Dr. Neeraj Jain)

No. Only those patients who have recovered from Covid-19 can donate plasma and, that too after a minimum of 4 weeks.

What if one misses the 2nd jab of vaccine and the gap between the two increases?

(Answered by Dr. Harsh Mahajan and Dr. Rahul Gupta)

Even if the gap between two jabs increases or the date is missed, one should still get vaccinated.

What are the basic medicines for Covid-19 that one should keep?

(Answered by Dr. Rahul Gupta)

Paracetamol and multi vitamins are safe to use but, hoarding medicines in times of crisis is not recommended.

How is CB-NAAT different from RTPCR?

(Answered by Dr. Harsh Mahajan)

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has given approval to the CB-NAAT and TrueNAT machines as confirmatory tests for Covid-19, and these can be used in place of RT-PCR. While RT-PCR enables testing around 90 samples at a time and takes up to a day to generate results, CB-NAAT can produce test results within 45 minutes but can run only 25 samples at a time. The CB-NAAT is also conducted through similar testing methods involving nasal and oral swabs.

In addition to RT-PCR, CB-NAAT can be used in emergency wards of hospitals and can help to ramp up testing with faster result generation during emergencies.
