

Symptoms

As we enter another lockdown, it's time you recognised a few lesser-known indicators of the Covid-19 pandemic

By AASHEESH SHARMA

LAST week, with 85,761 cases, including 53,219 active ones, India reached a grim milestone, overtaking the incidence of Covid-19 in China. There is talk about China flattening the curve while that is still to happen here. Add to that the declaration by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal that close to 75 per cent of the new cases of Covid-19 in the national Capital are symptomatic and the picture becomes even more uncertain. For the common citizen, the tell-tale signs of Covid-19 were limited to those accepted by health authorities in India and prescribed by the World Health Organisation (WHO). According to the WHO, "The most common symptoms of Covid-19 are fever, dry cough, and tiredness. Some patients may have aches and pains, nasal congestion, sore throat or diarrhoea. These symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually."

But around the beginning of this month, patients with a new set of symptoms began approaching hospitals with Covid facilities around the world. These were not just fever, cough or fatigue. This brought in a new paradigm in the battle against Coronavirus. Let us call them Symptoms 2.0.

In the wake of increasing cases worldwide, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the US agency charged with tracking and investigating public health trends, has come up with new symptoms of novel coronavirus which were a departure from the initial symptoms such as influenza and respiratory problems. MAIL TODAY decided to pick the brains of the leading doctors in the national Capital on the subject. Here's what they told us.



ALL THE VIRUS SYMPTOMS

- Cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fever, chills (the feeling of being cold without an apparent cause)
- Sore throat
- Extreme loss of taste or smell
- Gastro-intestinal symptoms such as nausea or diarrhoea
- Headache
- Stomach ache
- Rashes, frost bite or gangrene
- Joint aches, especially those involving the pelvis in middle-aged people.
- Fall in blood pressure, increased pulse, altered heart rhythm, particularly in elderly patients

THE NEW ENEMIES

According to Dr. Colonel Vijay Dutta of the Indian Spinal Injuries Centre, the set of symptoms is indeed expanding. "Earlier patients diagnosed Covid positive were coming with problems such as cough, cold and fever. Since the virus is mutating, people are coming with new symptoms such as discomfort in abdomen, diarrhoea and extreme and sudden loss of smell," explains Dr Dutta.

According to Dr. NV Mathur, Director and Additional DGHS,

Lady Hardinge Medical College, many of these new symptoms, which were first seen in countries around the world, have begun to manifest themselves in India. "There are patients coming to us with newer symptoms. We've had some cases of children coming with diarrhoea as well as others with loss of smell. In fact, one of our doctor colleagues displayed only one symptom: sudden loss of smell. He was isolated and is now undergoing treatment in the Covid ward, but his sense of smell has since come back."



VIRUS MUTATION?

Whether new or old, most doctors maintain that Covid-19 symptoms usually appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. Also, regularly switching up the genetic code is an essential part of how a virus evolves, says Dr R K Singhal, Principal Consultant and Director of Medical & Allied Services, BLK Super Speciality Hospital. "The Covid-19 virus changes its genetic code extremely rapidly. The presence of a large range of mutations of the Sars-Cov-2 virus in India's population could have serious implications on the clinical presentation, accuracy of diagnostic tests and even creating a vaccine. Scientists from around the world have warned that a mutation called D614G in the Spike protein region of the

Covid-19 virus is of utmost concern as it makes the virus more contagious. An analysis of 82 strains of the virus in India has shown that nearly 50 per cent of them have the new mutation, while globally, nearly two-thirds of all strains displayed this mutation."

SKIN-DEEP

Dr Mahesh Lakhe an infectious diseases specialist with Columbia Asia Hospital, Pune, points out to another category of Covid-19 symptoms which relate to our skin. "These include red rashes, widespread hives, or chickenpox-like lesions. Many of these rashes may represent superficial clotting or even bleeding in the skin. Milder neurological symptoms, such as loss of taste or smell, headache, dizziness, or muscle

2.0



weakness, may appear early in the illness. More severe neurological symptoms may develop later on," says Dr Lakhe. "Some patients with Covid-19 also display symptoms of stroke and heart attack," he adds. Dr. Raman Abhi, Director, Internal Medicine, Fortis Memorial Research Institute - Gurugram, says other than the common known symptoms of fever, cough and cold other symptoms that can be seen in Covid-19 positive patients are stomach ache, rashes and joint aches in the abdominal area, particularly for middle-aged patients. Also, elderly patients or those having



Dr NN Mathur

other illnesses such as diabetes, hypertension and immune compromised state have more chance of developing complications or severe illness while the middle aged and children may be asymptomatic or have mild or moderate severe illness and generally have fair chances of recovery," says Dr. Manoj Sharma, Senior Consultant, Internal Medicine, Medeor Hospital - Qutab. There is still a lot about Covid-19 that is in the realm of the unknown, says Dr SK Wangnoo, Senior Consultant Endocrinologist at the Apollo Centre for Obesity, Diabetes & Endocrinology, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals.



Above, left: Dr Raman Abhi
Right: Dr Manoj Sharma



Above, left: Dr (Col) Vijay Dutta
Right: Dr Mahesh Lakhe



Above, left: Dr SK Wangnoo
Above, right: Dr Rajesh Chawla

"As Covid-19 is a new disease, there are no studies about its long-term trajectory for those with more severe symptoms or proving that it is due to a Covid strain mutation, but experts say coronavirus can attach to human cells in many parts of the body and penetrate many major organs, including the heart, kidneys, brain, and even blood vessels."

Dr Rajesh Chawla, Senior Consultant, Institutes of Critical Care Respiratory and Sleep Medicine, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, New Delhi, says it is a little early to say whether the virus which causes Covid-19 has indeed seen a mutation. "Over the past few weeks, virology experts have been claiming about a possible mutation in this virus, but there are no confirmed studies to prove it. As the pandemic advances, we expect to see more diversity in its symptoms and ways of its transmission. Maybe then it will be easier to ascertain whether this is a Covid mutation or just gradual discovery of symptoms which depends from person to person or the patient's co-morbidities."

Going forward, when there are relaxations in the lockdown, all of us need to display even more self-discipline, adds Dr NN Mathur. "Now is the time when there will be actual inter-mingling of people. Our best bets remain social distancing, keeping a distance of one metre, wherever possible two metres, washing your hands at regular intervals and wearing masks whenever we venture out."

ONE FOR MOMS & INFANTS

MOTHERHOOD Hospitals has tied up with Dunzo for delivery of essential medicines at the doorstep. This initiative ensures all to-be moms and new-born babies continue to get their medicines on time and without hassles.

As per the directive issued by the Union Health Ministry allowing the doorstep delivery of essential medicines as part of an effort to restrict people's movement further, Dunzo's no-contact delivery will ensure that medicines are delivered safely to customers across the various units of the hospitals in Noida, Pune, Chennai, Coimbatore, Mumbai and Indore, announced Vijayarathna Venkatraman, CEO, Motherhood Hospitals.



RAMPING UP COVID TESTING



PUNE-BASED Mylab Discovery Solutions has completed expansion of its production capacity to manufacture Covid-19 RT-PCR tests. Mylab will scale-up manufacturing to 2 lakh tests per day from the second week of May.

Adar Poonawalla, CEO, Serum Institute of India said, "As our production capacity increases from 20,000 tests per day, we will now be able to meet India's growing demand for testing. This is an important milestone for the Make in India initiative as it sets a precedent of health institutions coming together to work towards the interest of public health," he added.

SMALL BYTES



TIME TO BUILD IMMUNITY

VESTIGE Marketing Pvt. Ltd. is witnessing a spike in demand for its immunity building as well as its home and personal hygiene products in pandemic season. To gear up for this demand, the company is adjusting production schedules of its immunity boosting nutrition supplements, home care and personal hygiene product ranges. Said Gautam Ball, MD, Vestige Marketing Pvt Ltd. "Each one of us need to stay healthy and positive, be patient and have faith that it is only a matter of time before we come out of this situation. The three golden rules of protection are social distancing, maintaining highest level of hygiene, and uncompromised nutrition. The present crisis has underscored the importance of proven immunity boosting nutrition generics and supplements by those who can access them."

PACEMAKER IN PANDEMIC



PARAS Hospital