

# COVID-19

## Q&A ON COVID-19 AND NCDS

21 MAY 2020

### IF I HAVE HEART DISEASE, WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT COVID-19?

#### 1 ARE PEOPLE WITH HEART DISEASE MORE LIKELY TO GET COVID-19?

- People with heart disease, especially, if older, are more likely to develop severe symptoms from COVID-19 than those without heart problems.
- In the USA, almost 40% of those hospitalized with COVID-19 had heart disease.
- Coronavirus can affect the heart in multiple ways such as increasing workload on the heart, worsening heart failure symptoms.
- It is also harder for some people with heart disease to clear the virus as they have a weaker immune system.

#### 2 IF I HAVE HEART DISEASE, WHAT SHOULD I DO TO AVOID GETTING COVID-19?

- Wash your hands frequently, always avoid touching your face.
- Stay away from anyone who you know is sick.
- Ask family and friends who are sick or could be sick to kindly avoid visiting you.
- Always stay at least 3 feet (1 meter) apart from any other person when you are outside of the house.
- Minimize, and if possible, completely avoid, going to places with large crowds – this



- includes the stores, supermarkets, and pharmacies. When possible, ask a friend or relative who is healthy to purchase necessary items for you.
- Wear a face mask for protection if you must leave home to go to crowded areas.

#### 3 HOW CAN I PREPARE MYSELF AND MY FAMILY DURING THIS PANDEMIC?

- Planning for essentials like food, water and medicines is critical.
- Ensure that you have an adequate supply of all your medications. Keep at least a 90-day supply, on hand.
- Ensure an adequate supply of healthy food choices.
- Be physically active every day.
- Have cleaning supplies in your home (soap, disinfectants, hand sanitizer).
- Reduce and manage your stress.
- If you have had heart failure, or heart-failure-like symptoms, check your weight regularly. If it is rising rapidly, it can be due to too much fluid in the body that can lead to trouble breathing.
- Have your doctor's phone number handy, somewhere you and your family members

# COVID-19

can find it easily. Other phone numbers that may be helpful to have on hand are: pharmacy, medical specialists, insurance provider.

## 4 WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I FEEL ILL?

- If you develop chest pain call your doctor right away. This can often be accompanied by dizziness, nausea, vomiting, sweating, numbness/tingling of the hand, and difficulty breathing.
- Do not be afraid to seek care if you are not well. Most hospitals and clinics have set up ways of protecting people coming in from getting infected by the coronavirus. It is important to get help if you are sick.

## 5 SHOULD I STILL GO TO THE DOCTOR FOR REGULARLY SCHEDULED VISITS?

- It is important to keep your regularly scheduled doctor visits.
- Many clinics have established ways to talk to the doctor on the phone without having to physically go to the clinic. This keeps you safe by keeping you away from places where you could be exposed to the coronavirus. Be sure to stay in touch with your doctor.



## 6 IS THERE ANYTHING I SHOULD KNOW ABOUT MY MEDICATIONS WITH THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?

- Do not start or stop any medication without first talking to your doctor.
- The most important thing is to take your medications regularly as prescribed.
- Make sure you do not run out of your medication. Call your pharmacy for a 3-month's supply of all your medications. This makes sure that you don't run out and means you don't have to go to the pharmacy as often.
- At this time there is no evidence that any medications should be stopped if you develop COVID-19.

## 7 WHAT CAN I DO IF I AM FEELING STRESSED OR ANXIOUS?

- These are trying times that can be very stressful. Many individuals with chronic disease already have a lot on their mind and may have underlying depression and/or anxiety. The COVID-19 pandemic can make things more difficult. Know that you are not alone.
- Be sure to find ways of taking a break from coronavirus news, this provides you with the space to think about your wellbeing.
- Stay connected to friends and family. Call friends and family members regularly to maintain social connectedness.
- Find things that help you relax, such as reading, listening to music, or walking.
- If things become too much, if you experience a great deal of anxiety or depression, be sure to reach out for help: call your friend or family member or call your physician.

PAHO/NMH/MH/COVID-19/20-0015  
© Pan American Health Organization, 2020.  
Some rights reserved. This work is available  
under license CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

**PAHO**



Pan American  
Health  
Organization



World Health  
Organization  
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE  
Americas

**BE AWARE. PREPARE. ACT.**

[www.paho.org/coronavirus](http://www.paho.org/coronavirus)