Qatar has taken all necessary preventive measures against coronavirus

As the world continues the fight against Novel Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19), Qatar has taken all necessary preventing measures to tackle the threat emanating from the disease.

The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) has been working with Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) and Primary Health Care Corporation in close collaboration with all stakeholders, including Qatar Airways and Hamad International Airport (HIA), to ensure appropriate measures are in place to protect Qatar’s population from the novel coronavirus that has caused an epidemic in China and has spread to other countries.

Recently, the Minister of Public Health HE Dr Hanan Mohamed al Kuwari, met with staff at HMC’s Communicable Disease Center (CDC) amid the healthcare sector’s ongoing preventive measures and monitoring for cases of the Novel Coronavirus 2019.

During her visit, Dr Kuwari received an update on the ongoing measures in place across the country to manage the threat of Novel Coronavirus 2019. The CDC was opened in 2016 and is the first facility of its kind in the region. The purpose-built facility is equipped to care for patients with rare or unknown, highly communicable diseases and any patient with suspected Novel Coronavirus 2019 is admitted to the CDC while awaiting their test results.

Recently while speaking on the sidelines of signing of memorandum of understanding (MoU) between MoPH and Qatar International Court and Dispute Resolution Centre (QICDRC), MoPH Director of Public Health Department Sheikh Dr Mohamed al Thani said, “We would like to assure people that Qatar has taken all the measures needed to ensure that we are getting with the protocols.”

According to Sheikh Dr al Thani, in Qatar, the pandemic preparedness committee has met to ensure that we align the resources to ensure that all the cases are covered by thermal cameras at the HIA.

There are awareness messages on the aircraft to enlighten the passengers on how to fill the papers needed towards what’s happening and let them know that they can come and seek help in case they experience any symptom while here in Qatar.

Sheikh Dr Al Thani reiterated that Qatar is well prepared for any cases that might occur; “We are well prepared and have continuity from the airport.”

He advised that anyone who traveled from China with symptoms should seek medical attention immediately and identify themselves as people who arrived from China in the last two weeks.

Qatar has taken all required preventive measures and is closely following the protocols and guidelines set out by international bodies, including the World Health Organization.

While the risk for infection remains low, any resident who experiences fever, cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing, and has traveled to China, or had contact with an infected person, in the last 14 days should immediately call the MoPH hotline on 6674 0948 or 6674 0951 for further assistance or visit their nearest primary health center.

For more information on Novel Coronavirus 2019 visit https://www.moph.gov.qa/
HE Minister of Public Health HE Dr Hanan Mohamed al Kuwari was on the forefront to promote physical activity on National Sport Day which was marked on February 11.

Ministry of Public Health, Hamad Medical Corporation and Primary Health Care Corporation took part in various sporting activities that highlighted the importance of sports and physical activities for physical and mental well-being.

Dr al Kuwari took part in the activities organised at the Hamad Bin Khalifa Medical City where a large number of employees from the ministry and corporations took part in.

The activities included a walkathon, football match as well as a number of various activities aimed at promoting the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle through sports. There were also various medical examinations.

Dr al Kuwari said that the National Sport Day supports in promoting health and emphasises the importance of sport and its role in the lives of individuals and societies.

Al Kuwari said that the National Sport Day assumes even more importance at a time when Qatar is preparing to host the FIFA 2022 FIFA World Cup, an event that promotes a healthy lifestyle.

Dr al Kuwari explained that the Sport Day demonstrates the great interest of country’s wise leadership that makes health and well-being of its citizens a priority.

Dr al Kuwari said, "The Ministry of Public Health and health sector institutions are adopting many important initiatives aimed at enhancing the health of the population by focusing on prevention and wellness, which includes greater interest in adopting healthy lifestyles such as exercising regularly according to the recommended levels, healthy diet and avoiding unhealthy practices for a healthier and more vibrant life."
HEALTH CHECK TEAM
DOHA

The first anniversary of the establishment of the National Center for Rare Diseases in Qatar was the focus of the third Doha–Heidelberg Research Conference on Rare Diseases, which was hosted recently by Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) and Heidelberg University Hospital (HUH).

HMC and HUH have achieved a highly effective partnership in clinical services, training, education, and research and Dr Saad al Kaabi, Chairman of the International Medical Affairs Office at HMC, Chair of the Doha–Heidelberg Research Conference and Chair of the Rare Disease Multidisciplinary Team and Research Committee said the annual two-day conference is a strategic deliverable of the long-standing collaboration between the two organisations. “The wide-ranging benefits of our partnership include the provision of specialist clinical services as well as training for HMC physicians, and education and research through site visits and annual symposia that support the exchange of experiences and knowledge,” added Dr. al Kaabi.

One notable achievement of the HMC-HUH collaboration was the establishment of the National Center for Rare Diseases in Qatar, which was announced at last year’s conference, held in February 2019. The Center, the first of its kind in the Middle East, is the main point of contact for many patients with rare diseases. Through expert multidisciplinary teamwork between HMC and HUH, the Center aims to support the diagnosis and management of patients with rare and complex diseases. In addition to providing clinical care, the National Center for Rare Diseases in Qatar also supports state-of-the-art research and provides education to local clinicians in the management of rare diseases.

Dr Reem al Sulaiman, Interim Deputy Chair of the Medical Genetics Department at HMC and Assistant Chair of the Rare Disease Multidisciplinary Team explained, “We aim to improve the lives of people living with rare diseases in Qatar and the region; and through joint exploration with the Heidelberg team, we can contribute to and promote the latest developments in rare disease research.”

Another achievement accomplished in the past year was the establishment of the new HMC Medical Genetics Department. The establishment of this new department has centralised all genetics subspecialties across HMC, providing more effective clinical genetics services and enabling more efficient pooling of resources. In addition, the department offers training in medical genetics and genetic counseling and specialised research opportunities for Qatar and the region.

Dr Tawfeg Ben Omran, Chief of the Genetic and Genomic Medicine Department and Chair of the Doha–Heidelberg Research Conference scientific committee said the collaboration between HMC and HUH will benefit the entire region. The conference’s keynote presentation was delivered by Professor Dr Annette Grüters-Kieslich, Medical Director and Chair of the Executive Board of the Medical Faculty of Heidelberg University Hospital, who outlined the collaboration and future research opportunities between Qatar and the German Center for Rare Diseases.
Although not all cases and types of cancers can be prevented, more than a third of all cancers are preventable through lifestyle changes.

Exercise and eating healthily can reduce the risk of being diagnosed with cancer.

Hamad Medical Corporation’s (HMC) National Center for Cancer Care and Research (NCCCR) Senior Consultant at the Oncology Department Dr Usama al Homsi said, “We know that not all types of cancer can be prevented, but we know that we can protect ourselves from different types of cancer by 33 percent if we follow a healthy lifestyle which includes a healthy diet; maintaining daily physical activity and ideal body weight.”

He added that avoiding tobacco smoking which is considered as the main cause of 15 types of cancer including cancer of limbs, tongue, nasopharynx, larynx, lung, stomach, ovaries and some types of leukemia.

Dr al Homsi added that smoking is the cause of 71 percent of deaths from lung cancer.

He added that it is also known that drinking alcohol is related to different types of cancer, for instance, head and neck cancer, liver cancer, colon and breast cancer.

Research indicates that an unhealthy diet and lack of physical activity are two key factors that can increase a person’s risk of being diagnosed with cancer. This risk can, however, be reduced through implementing simple steps such as taking a brisk 30-minute walk every day and eating in moderation.

Dr al Homsi thanked the leadership of Qatar for having a great vision for cancer care which has resulted in having the up-to-date technology in diagnosis and treatment of cancer. “We are proud to have the NCCCR as one of the best cancer centres in the region, having the ability to treat all types of cancer according to the best available modern therapies which was acknowledged by international accreditation agencies.”

He added that they also have a successful stem cell transplant programme which was started in 2015. “Our statistics showed that there is an average of 12 percent annual growth in the number of Qatari patients receiving cancer treatment in our center with 72 percent increase since 2013.”

It is worth to note that currently there is no cure for cancer. However, successful treatment can result in cancer going into remission, which means that all signs of it have gone.
Get screened for breast and bowel cancer

Catherine W Gichuki

RE you a woman in Qatar aged between 45 and 69 years, or are you a female or male aged between 50 and 74 years old? Get screened for breast and bowel cancer at the cosy screening suite in Al Wakra, Leabaib, Rawdat Al Khail Health Centers or via the Screen for Life mobile unit.

Mammogram and FIT test are done for free. The screening is part of the ‘Screen for Life’ conducted by Qatar’s National Cancer Programme, which is carried out by the Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) with support from the Ministry of Public Health and Hamad Medical Corporation.

Manager of Screening Programmes at PHCC Dr Shaikha Abu Shaikha said that last year, more than 25,000 people in Qatar underwent breast or bowel cancer screening with ‘Screen for Life,’ which is Qatar’s National Breast and Bowel Cancer Screening programme operated by PHCC. “This made 2019 our most successful screening year since ‘Screen for Life’s’ inception four years ago. Also as of the beginning of 2020 the new bowel cancer screening guideline will be adopted, so screening for bowel cancer will now be every two years instead of every one year.”

She said that 14,293 people underwent screening for bowel cancer with 10,983 taking up the opportunity of free mammograms for breast cancer.

According to her the screenings were carried out either at the three PHCC screening suites at Al Wakra, Leabaib and Rawdat Al Khail Health Centers or, in the case of mammograms, via the Screen for Life mobile unit.

Catherine Gichuki

“Last year, more than 25,000 people in Qatar underwent breast or bowel cancer screening with ‘Screen for Life,’ which is Qatar’s National Breast and Bowel Cancer Screening programme operated by PHCC.

“This made 2019 our most successful screening year since ‘Screen for Life’s’ inception four years ago. Also as of the beginning of 2020 the new bowel cancer screening guideline will be adopted, so screening for bowel cancer will now be every two years instead of every one year.”

– Dr Shaikha Abu Shaikha,
Manager of Screening Programmes at PHCC

“The year was also tremendously successful in terms of delivering more knowledge about these cancers and how early screening is vital to the survival. More lectures than ever were held – 31 in total which attracted a combined audience of almost 938 people. Some 455 physicians trained in the importance of screening and early detection via 45 training sessions resulting in over 5,901 people being referred for screening. In addition, more partners from both the public and private sectors were engaged in our mission.”

She said that breast cancer screening participation within Qatar has now reached 52 percent of the target segment. “This percentage indicates that the National Breast and Bowel Cancer Programme in Qatar is in line with the key areas when compared to similar national programmes worldwide.”

2019 also saw pioneering Qatar Municipality Council Member and Head of the Legal Committee Shaikha bint Yousif bin Hassan al Jufairi become a brand ambassador for ‘Screen for Life’.

For screening one can call PHCC on 107 or 800112.
MoPH reviews the progress of Qatar’s National Diabetes Strategy 2016-2022

HEALTH CHECK TEAM

THE Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) recently organised the second edition of Diabetes Leadership Forum 2020 to review the progress that has been made since the launch of Qatar’s National Diabetes Strategy 2016-2022 and the Strategy Action Plan for the next two years.

The event was held under the patronage of the Prime Minister and Minister of Interior HE Sheikh Khalid bin Khalifa bin Abdulaziz al Thani and was attended by the Minister of Public Health HE Dr Hanan Mohammed al Kuwari.

The event also witnessed the launch of the National Agenda for Diabetes Research and cardiovascular risk factors, which were recently added to the strategy with focus on the importance of systematic approach to diabetes research and its key role in addressing the burden of diabetes in the coming decades.

Dr al Kuwari said that the forum, which brought together unique expertise from around the world, contributes to sharing experiences and enhancing capabilities to address diabetes, which is a major health challenge. “The Ministry of Public Health and its partners are working closely through the National Diabetes Strategy to better address and manage the burden of the disease by creating a clear framework for the development of the necessary capacities and tools. The National Diabetes Research Agenda sets the appropriate scientific research priorities for Qatar in terms of environmental, cultural and social aspects to help identify the most effective methods to prevention and treatment.”

The Diabetes Leadership Forum was organised by the MOPH in collaboration with the Qatar Metabolic Institute (QMI), which focuses on diabetes, Hamad Medical Corporation, Primary Health Care Corporation and the Qatar Diabetes Association.

MoPH Director of the Public Health Department Sheikh Dr Mohammed bin Hamad al Thani said, “We are very proud of the progress made in implementing the National Diabetes Strategy so far, and we look forward to addressing this problem and its serious repercussions.”

MoPH Head of the Department of Non-Communicable Diseases Dr Khalid al Mutawa, lauded the significant progress in achieving the goals of the National Diabetes Strategy, including achieving the objectives of awareness and prevention campaigns, and public education initiatives with regard to tests, among others. “Today, Qatari families are more familiar with diabetes and its risk factors and are better prepared to protect themselves, and this is just the beginning of a long journey.”

Professor Abdul-Badi Abou Samra, Co-chair of the National Diabetes Committee and Director of HMC’s Qatar Metabolic Institute said, “The responsibility for treating diabetes lies with health care institutions. As for the prevention of diabetes, it requires collaborative efforts on part of all government sectors including education, environment, transportation, planning, economics, etc. The wide participation of different groups of society is a cornerstone for the success of the prevention programme in Qatar.”
Do not burn charcoal and wood indoors to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning

HEALTH CHECK TEAM
DOHA

As the winter season continues with a dip in temperatures, residents have been advised against burning charcoal and wood in enclosed spaces due to the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) Consultant of Emergency Medicine Dr Galal Saleh al Essai recently said that during the colder months, some people seek ways to keep their homes warm and resort to burning coal or wood inside. “When charcoal and wood burn without oxygen they produce fossil fuels that release carbon monoxide - a colorless, tasteless, and odorless gas. Carbon monoxide is very hard to detect, leading to people inhaling it and being poisoned. This can happen very quickly and is extremely dangerous.”

Dr Al Essai, who is also Vice-Chairman of Corporate Affairs at HMC’s Emergency Department said that symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning can start to appear within five to 20 minutes of exposure. “Lower concentrations may lead to a delay in the onset of symptoms. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning can include a headache, dizziness, nausea, shortness of breath, weakness, and confusion. Anyone who develops symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning should immediately get fresh air and seek emergency medical care.”

According to him severe cases of carbon monoxide poisoning can result in muscle cramps, fainting, loss of consciousness, and death due to a lack of oxygen to the heart and brain. He said the effects of carbon monoxide poisoning are particularly dangerous for children, pregnant women, the elderly, and those with chronic heart disease, respiratory problems, or anemia. Dr Al Essai said that anyone who suspects carbon monoxide poisoning should not ignore their symptoms and when seeking medical attention should indicate they suspect carbon monoxide poisoning. “If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning, get help immediately. Open doors and windows to allow fresh air into the space and call for help. Carbon monoxide poisoning is so dangerous that treatment will be administered immediately if suspected and normally involves breathing pure oxygen to increase oxygen levels in the blood and to help remove carbon monoxide from the blood. The use of a pressurised oxygen device (known as a hyperbaric oxygen chamber) may also be part of the treatment. Most patients with suspected carbon monoxide poisoning will remain under clinical observation for up to 48 hours.”

He advised that to help prevent carbon monoxide poisoning he recommended never to use a gas-powered generator indoors, including inside a camper or tent, ensuring battery-operated electronic heating appliances are approved; approved appliances will include an authorisation number or mark, and never burning charcoal or wood indoors unless it is in an approved indoor wood-burning or charcoal-burning appliance. He added that residents should never use a gas range or oven for heating as this can cause a build-up of carbon monoxide inside the home, cabin, or camper.

“When charcoal and wood burn without oxygen they produce fossil fuels that release carbon monoxide - a colorless, tasteless, and odorless gas. Carbon monoxide is very hard to detect, leading to people inhaling it and being poisoned. This can happen very quickly and is extremely dangerous.”

— Dr. Galal Saleh Al Essai, Consultant of Emergency Medicine at HMC
SMOKING IN CLOSED PUBLIC SPACES IS PUNISHABLE BY LAW

According to Article 17 of Law No. 19 of 2016 on the control of tobacco and its derivatives:

Without prejudice to any more severe penalty stipulated in any other law, a penalty of not less than one thousand (1000) Riyals, not exceeding three thousand (3000) Riyals shall be imposed on anyone who smokes cigarettes or tobacco or its derivatives, or permits smoking in closed public places where smoking is prohibited.

VIOLATION HOTLINE 50302001
GHCC@MOPH.GOV.QA
moph.gov.qa