COVID-19 precautionary measures continue

Even with the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, all recommended precautionary measures remain

CATHERINE W GICHUKI
Doha

EVEN as Qatar continues with the gradual lifting of the COVID-19 restrictions, people have been advised to continue following the recommended preventative measures to protect themselves and support the country’s efforts in limiting the spread of the COVID-19.

The four main preventative measures that people need to follow if they have to leave the house include wearing a face mask, installing and activating the Enteraz app on their smartphones, maintaining a two-metre distance from those around, and washing hands before leaving and after returning home.

Ministry of Public Health’s Head of the Vaccination Department and Leader of COVID-19 Tracing and Detection Team Dr Soha Albayat said, “With the beginning of Phase 1 of decreasing the restrictions that were implemented to combat COVID-19, I would like to remind everybody that it does not mean the avoidance of the other measures like social distancing, wearing of masks, sneezing and coughing etiquette, using sanitizer or frequent washing of hands using soap and water. There will be so many areas that will be opened in phase 1 including the public parks, the Corniche and this is not going to be opened for picnics or family gatherings. It is only for sports purposes and it is preferable if individuals go on their own or a maximum of two to three people of the same family.”

Dr Albayat advised that even then people should maintain social distancing and also use their own towels, water bottles, and no spitting or sitting on the benches. “If you rest put on your masks again and when you go to the car put on the mask again and follow all the previous recommendations. This is a social responsibility. I am responsible, you are responsible. We are all responsible to protect ourselves, families, loved ones and entire society. I wish you all safety and wellbeing.”

Hamad Medical Corporation’s Executive Director of Corporate Infection Prevention Dr Jameela Al Ajmi said that as COVID-19 restrictions in the country begin to be lifted, health officials will be relying on the public to help contain the spread of the virus by continuing to adhere to infection prevention measures.

She said that the people need to remember that there is no vaccine or cure yet, therefore all should work together to carefully balance the risks. “We must not become complacent in following infection prevention measures. These life saving practices will be essential to protecting the members of our community who are most likely to experience serious illness should they contract COVID-19.”

Are you an older adult or caregiver?

Global evidence indicates that older adults, especially those with chronic health conditions, are at higher risk of getting severely ill if they contract the coronavirus disease, according to Hamad Medical Corporation’s Rumailah Hospital Consultant Physician and Geriatrician Dr Irfan Muneeb. According to him, older people are a vulnerable group as their immunity tends to be lower than younger people. PAGE 2

Advice for breastfeeding mothers during COVID-19

Breastfeeding is one of the most effective ways to ensure child health and survival. Breastmilk is the ideal food for infants. It is safe, clean and contains antibodies which help protect against many common childhood illnesses. Breastmilk provides all the energy and nutrients that the infant needs for the first months of life, and it continues to provide up to half or more of a child’s nutritional needs during the second half of the first year. PAGE 6
Global evidence indicates that older adults, especially those with chronic health conditions, are at higher risk of getting severely ill if they contract the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), according to Hamad Medical Corporation’s (HMC) Rumailah Hospital Consultant Physician and Geriatrician Dr Irfan Muneeb.

According to him, older people are a vulnerable group as their immunity tends to be lower than younger people, especially if they have other health problems, such as heart or kidney disease, or are being treated for cancer or other illnesses. “A less strong immune system means their bodies are less able to fight off a viral infection. As there is no vaccine for this virus, the emphasis is on those who are at higher risk of getting severely ill. People who are at higher risk include those who are 60 years of age and older, those who are 50 years of age and older with underlying medical conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, or chronic kidney disease, and those who are pregnant.”

“A person who is at increased risk of illness or death from COVID-19 should stay home if possible. This includes those who are older and those who have underlying medical conditions that put them at greater risk. Those who are at higher risk of COVID-19 are more likely to develop severe illness upon infection.”

Therefore, besides the precautionary measures such as washing hands often and for at least 20 seconds, social distancing, keeping away from people who are sick; stocking up on supplies and shopping online; cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces; avoiding all cruise travel and non-essential air travel, older adults should also call a healthcare professional if they have concerns about COVID-19 and if they have underlying condition or if they are sick.

However, it is worth to note that older people while practicing social distancing or if they have been in quarantine facilities, are at serious risk of mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression. There are several things they can do such as:

- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories and social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be worrying.
- Take care of yourself. Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, and avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Make time to unwind. Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.
- Call your healthcare provider if stress gets in the way of your daily activities for several days in a row.

Role of caregivers

Caregivers are in a unique position to help and facilitate the elderly in various activities. Let’s look at how caregivers can provide invaluable support in keeping seniors engaged.

- Help with technology. Caregivers can teach seniors how to use a smartphone, laptop or tablets in the privacy of their home. It can take time to become comfortable and familiar with technology if you have never used it before. Caregivers can show seniors how to use social media apps such as FaceTime to maximize their potential to bring people together and keep in touch with their loved ones.
- Companion. Caregivers can fill that vital gap of socialisation—whether it is talking about family, life history, current events, or feelings. Conversation helps people feel connected and appreciated. It stimulates the brain in positive and meaningful ways.
- Playing games. Having someone to play games with opens up a whole new world of possibilities. These could be card games, board games, sharing a puzzle, or learning online activities that are mentally stimulating.

COVID-19 Warriors Corner

FIVE-STAR. I am 50-years-old and I have been to so many countries in the world and I can say besides the facilities, the human resources that Qatar is pulling now especially for the COVID-19 crisis is amazing. Among the places I have been, it is the best so far. The services being given at the hospital were five-star. The facility is brand new and the equipment was new. The healthcare system in Qatar is wonderful and on top of that it is free. Twenty-five days in the ward and about 11 days in ICU, if it was anywhere else in the world, it would have cost a lot of money. Everything here was taken care of.

Hassan al Badr, 59
- Qatar

Frankly, I never expected to become sick and catch the virus. But I started sweating and I thought it might be a case of flu or something like that. So I went to Leabaib Health Center. I was tested and the results showed it was COVID-19. However, they were not sure so I was sent to Hamz Mabireek General Hospital and by this time I had already started experiencing shortness of breath. My own symptoms started from March 25 with a dry cough and then fever, so I called the infection control and they told me to go to staff clinic for a test.

Then they put me on non-invasive and because my lungs were really bad, I was intubated. I woke up after 3 days after my lungs got better. I am so grateful for those people for prayed for me. This is a serious matter, don’t take it for granted.

I want to thank Dr Mohammed Katif, MICU consultant, who was the one taking care of me. The treatment that I experienced is really excellent and with advanced healthcare facilities, the level of services and the quick response and fast delivery of service in treating patients are extraordinary to protect the patients.

See more video on People who recovered from COVID-19 share their stories
How to lead a healthy lifestyle during summer

**HEALTH CHECK TEAM**

**DOHA**

As mercury continues to soar, people should lead a healthy lifestyle to prevent themselves from conditions that are associated with high temperatures. Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) has recently offered tips on how to live healthy during summer.

Dr Khaled Shams Health Center Head

Dr Khaled Shams said that many people wait for summer months to rest and recuperate, especially after their break from studies and work. But there are many diseases that are associated with high temperatures and humidity. Besides, some people, whether adults or children, acquire bad habits, which can affect their health, especially patients with allergies. He reiterated that as a result of the habits that many people acquire during the summer season such as sitting or sleeping in room with the air conditioners, using electric fans, sudden change from hot to cold, and drinking cold drinks result in respiratory infections like cold or flu, sore throat, tonsillitis, asthma, and other respiratory infections. Children are especially prone to infections. According to Dr Shams, variations in swimming pools temperatures cause the spread of nose and ear allergies and sinus infections due to exposure to some chemicals (detergents) used to disinfect the pools.

Talking of the symptoms of rose allergies, Dr Shams said they include frequent sneezing, stuffy nose or runny nose, while the symptoms of ear allergies are such as severe itchy feeling, resulting in the insertion of a matchstick or key in the ear. "This leads to outer ear infections, or even eardrum rupture, causing severe bleeding, in addition to middle ear infections."

According to him, staying in swimming pools frequently is one of the major causes of outer ear fungal infections, and the symptoms include feeling pain and ear fullness among others.

Giving advice in order to prevent summer diseases, Dr Shams said that one should avoid the sudden change in the temperature, avoid direct exposure to cold air currents, drink water and fluids to stay hydrated and compensate for the fluids lost due to the high temperatures, avoid exposure to direct sunlight and dust, wear a head cover while swimming or put earplugs to keep water out of the ear. He also advised to make sure to choose clean swimming pools and to always consult the family doctor.

You are more vulnerable to addiction if you start smoking before turning 20

**HEALTH CHECK TEAM**

**DOHA**

Are you under 20 years old and have started smoking? Head of the Hamad Medical Corporation’s (HMC) Tobacco Control Center Dr Ahmad Al Mulla, also Head of the HMC’s Tobacco Control Center recently said that when a person starts to smoke before the age of twenty, they are more vulnerable to addiction. He said the brain and body of a young person are still developing, weakening their ability to benefit from smoking cessation treatment at that time or in the future. He said it is important to help young people maintain their health and don’t fall prey to tobacco addiction by raising awareness of the problem and enforcing strict tobacco control laws that protect young people from using tobacco products of all types.

World No Tobacco Day is observed globally on May 31 and the theme for this year is how to protect the world’s policymakers in every country.

Dr Al Mulla has also called on the relevant authorities to effectively implement law No. 10 of 2016 to combat smoking in the State of Qatar, which includes a number of sanctions designed to protect young people from using tobacco products, such as prohibiting the sale of tobacco products, such as restricting the sale of tobacco products to anyone under the age of 18 years old, as well as preventing the sale of tobacco products near schools and universities, and banning the sale of different smoking products such as sweika, medwakh, and e-cigarette.

Dr Al Mulla said that there are multiple methods and techniques used by the tobacco industry to entice young people to smoke, including adding different flavors such as strawberry, mint, and apple to tobacco products, using attractive packaging of smoking products, misleading young people, particularly boys, to view smoking as a masculine activity and enticing girls to view it as elegant. "In addition to promoting tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, through cinema and TV, companies are deliberately and systematically prompting their products to young people."

Dr Al Mulla has called on all smokers to take advantage of the services provided by HMC’s Tobacco Control Center, which include therapeutic counseling, medication therapy, behavioural therapy, and laser therapy to help smokers permanently give up smoking and release them from addiction to all types of tobacco products. For more information on HMC’s Tobacco Control Center, call 5080 0959.
HMC’s Heart Hospital Performs Life-Saving Open Heart Surgery on COVID-19 Patient

HEALTH CHECK TEAM
DOHA

A TEAM from Hamad Medical Corporation’s (HMC) Heart Hospital led by cardiac surgeon Dr. Abdulaziz Al Khulaifi recently conducted a life-saving surgery on a 43-year-old resident who experienced heart attack symptoms and had delayed going to the hospital due to concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. Al Khulaifi said that since the coronavirus pandemic began, hospitals around the world have been admitting fewer heart attack patients. According to him, treatment for heart disease can rarely be delayed and assured residents that Heart Hospital has protocols in place to protect patients and minimise their risk of exposure to COVID-19. “Some patients are afraid of getting COVID-19 if they go to the hospital or misunderstand directives about avoiding healthcare issues that can be delayed. Since shortness of breath can be a symptom of both a heart attack and COVID-19, some patients with heart problems may also be self-isolating at home, assuming they have the virus and hoping it will pass.”

According to Dr. Al Khulaifi, this patient had been having chest pain for about a week before going to the hospital. “We arranged for a coronary angiogram, a procedure that uses X-ray imaging to see the heart’s blood vessels, so we could determine if there was a restriction in blood flow going to the heart. We also arranged for him to be tested for COVID-19, as part of our standard care practice. The COVID-19 test came back positive and the angiogram showed that he had three-vessel disease (3VD).”

Three-vessel disease (3VD) is the most severe form of coronary atherosclerosis. 3VD means the three big vessels, the left anterior descending, right coronary, and circumflex arteries have blockages. Dr. Al Khulaifi says as part of Heart Hospital’s COVID-19 protocol, a virtual meeting of the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) was held to plan the best course of treatment for the patient.

Dr. Al Khulaifi said the MDT, which included Dr. Shady Ashraf, Dr. Hafeez Lone, Dr. Bassam Shouman, Dr. Suraj Sudarsanan, Mr. Rami Ahmad, Ms. Abeer Mahmoud, Ms. Khadejeh Mohammed, Ms. Shiji Varghese, Ms. Sujatha Shettra, and Ms. Julie Paul, played an important role in helping to ensure this story will have a happy ending. “We arranged for him to be tested for COVID-19, as part of our standard care practice. The COVID-19 test came back positive and the angiogram showed that he had three-vessel disease (3VD).”

Executive Director of Ajyal Educational Center Faisal Al Qahtani said they had visited the healthcare workers at their workplaces to thank them and give them presents. We’ve also visited the medical teams at Ras Laffan, Muaither and Al Khor and recently Qatar Rehabilitation Institute to extend our appreciation to the working teams and give souvenirs.”

“Thank you our white army.”

We would like to thank Ajyal Educational Center and the Qatar Medical Physicists Society for their social initiative which is called “Thank you our white army.”
A tribute to frontline healthcare workers from Al Zaeem Air College

HEALTH CHECK TEAM
DOHA

In an initiative to salute frontline and other healthcare professionals and express gratitude for their role in combating coronavirus pandemic in Qatar, aircrafts from Qatari Airforce (Mohammad Bin Al Atyya Air College - Al Zaeem) recently performed an air show over Hamad General Hospital and Hazm Mebaireek General Hospital.

The air show was aimed to pay tribute to healthcare professionals for their dedication and great efforts exerted to curb the spread of Coronavirus (Covid-19) and care for patients infected with the virus. Medical teams at HGH and HMGH stood in their white coats while the aircrafts flew over the sky of Doha to express their gratitude and appreciation to humanitarian initiatives by Al Zaeem Air College. Through air show they expressed the solidarity of all of the state’s institutions and departments for the efforts made by the health sector to confront coronavirus and to support all the relevant measures taken by the state. The medical teams expressed their gratitude towards the valuable initiative which undoubtedly confirms the great appreciation of the state’s civil and military institutions to the health system.

The medical teams also confirmed that they stood together to maintain the safety and health of the community in the same way as the military and security sectors in Qatar stand as impervious barrier to protect the nation’s borders and its interior security.
Breastfeeding is one of the most effective ways to ensure child health and survival. Breastmilk is the ideal food for infants. It is safe, clean and contains antibodies which help protect against many common childhood illnesses. Breastmilk provides all the energy and nutrients that the infant needs for the first months of life, and it continues to provide up to half or more of a child’s nutritional needs during the second half of the first year, and up to one third during the second year of life.

Dr Mohammed Ilyas Khan has some advice for mothers who are breastfeeding during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr Khan said that breastfeeding protects newborns from getting sick and also helps protect them throughout their infancy and childhood. Breastfeeding is particularly effective against infectious diseases because it strengthens the immune system by directly transferring antibodies from the mother. As with all confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases, mothers with any symptoms who are breastfeeding or practicing skin-to-skin contact should take precautions.

Actions for breastfeeding mothers
- Practice respiratory hygiene, including during feeding. If you have respiratory symptoms such as being short of breath, use a medical mask when near your child.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap or sanitizer before and after contact with your child.
- Routinely clean and disinfect any surfaces you touch.
- If you are severely ill with COVID-19 or suffer from other complications that prevent you from caring for your infant or continuing direct breastfeeding, express milk to safely provide breastmilk to your infant.
- If you are too unwell to breastfeed or express breastmilk, you should explore the possibility of relaxation (restating breastfeeding after a gap), wet nursing (another woman breastfeeding or caring for your child), or using donor human milk. Which approach to use will depend on cultural context, acceptability to you, and service availability.

Actions for health facilities and their staff
If you are providing maternity and newborn services, you should not promote breastmilk substitutes, feeding bottles, teats, pacifiers or dummies in any part of your facilities, or by any of your staff.

Enable mothers and infants to remain together and practice skin-to-skin contact, and rooming-in throughout the day and night, especially straight after birth during establishment of breastfeeding. Whether or not the mother or child has suspected, probable, or confirmed COVID-19.

Counselling and psychosocial support
If you, your infants, or young children have suspected or confirmed COVID-19, seek breastfeeding counselling, basic psychosocial support, or practical feeding support. You may get support from appropriately trained health care professionals and also community-based lay and peer breastfeeding counsellors.

Standard infant feeding guidelines
- Initiate breastfeeding within 1 hour of the birth.
- Continue exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months, then introduce adequate and safe complementary foods at age 6 months.
- Continue breastfeeding up to 2 years of age or beyond.

Dr Khan is the first Certified Lactation Consultant from 2005 and First QCHP Licensed Lactation Physician in State of Qatar. He is also Certified Mama Care Breast Specialist outside USA. Dr Khan started First Lactation Management Clinic at Al Khor and Al Wakra Hospital and recently along with these Hospitals he joined WWRC for Clinical Management of Breastfeeding
MoPH launches Qatar Medical Specialties Certification

THE Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) has recently announced the launch of Qatar Medical Specialties Certificate (Qatari Board). The new certification programme is an important step in improving the efficiency of practicing medical professionals in Qatar and its establishment represents the culmination of a major joint effort from the country’s health sector. The certification will help improve the quality of medical services in Qatar by setting standards to ensure that physicians who earn the credential demonstrate exceptional expertise in a particular specialty and/or subspecialty of medical practice.

MoPH’s Director of the Healthcare Professions Department Dr Saad Al Kaabi, said the registration for the Qatari Board is scheduled to open in July. He said details about the Qatari Board and its organisational structure and registration mechanism will be announced later.

Dr Saad Al Kaabi, Director of the Healthcare Professions Department, Ministry of Public Health.

Dr. Abdullatif Al Khal, Director of the Department of Medical Education, Hamad Medical Corporation.

Additionally, dairy products were classified as whole-fat or low-fat. Researchers analyzed the results and found an association of a 24% lower risk of metabolic syndrome, which is a group of symptoms that increase the risk of heart disease. That lowered risk was tied to having a minimum of two servings of dairy per day as opposed to eating no dairy. No association was found for lowered risk of metabolic syndrome and consuming only low-fat dairy.

Consuming whole-fat dairy had a stronger association than low-fat dairy with lowering the risk of diabetes and high blood pressure. But having at least two servings of any dairy product was linked to an 11–12% lower risk of having the aforementioned health conditions.

"Higher intake of dairy foods, such as milk, yogurt, and cheese, especially whole-fat dairy rather than low-fat dairy, is associated with a lower prevalence of metabolic syndrome and with a lower risk of developing hypertension and diabetes," said study co-author Andrew Mente, Ph.D., a principal investigator at St. Michael's Hospital and a professor at the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences in Toronto, Canada.

On average, people consumed 179 grams of dairy each day, which is equivalent to a little less than a glass of milk or a cup of yogurt per day. The results also showed that people in Europe and North and South America generally consumed more dairy than people in Asia and Africa. Low-fat was the preferred dairy among people in North America and Europe while people in other regions ate more whole-fat varieties. Researchers analyzed the results and found an association of a 24% lower risk of metabolic syndrome, which is a group of symptoms that increase the risk of heart disease. That lowered risk was tied to having a minimum of two servings of dairy per day as opposed to eating no dairy. No association was found for lowered risk of metabolic syndrome and consuming only low-fat dairy.

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The authors also hope to dispel the myth that reduced-fat foods are healthier than whole-fat foods.

"Dairy foods and dairy fat provide high-quality protein and a wide range of essential vitamins and minerals, including calcium, magnesium, potassium, zinc, phosphorus, and vitamins A, B-12, and riboflavin," Mente said.

Researchers hope to confirm their findings in larger, long-term trials.
Wash your hands regularly with soap and water or use a hand sanitizer.

Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze, and dispose of used tissues.

Avoid close contact with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness.

If you experience symptoms including cough, sneezing, and fever, limit your contact with other people.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with your hands.

For more info. Visit www.moph.gov.qa or call (16000)