

The second wave of Covid-19

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CURRENTLY, the number of corona patients is increasing in India. Hon'ble Health Minister of India has declared that there is a second wave of Corona in the State of Maharashtra. The second wave of corona epidemic has raised questions in the minds of many people. The public at large have some questions about the vaccine, we take against corona. Following are commonly asked questions and answers regarding second wave of corona and vaccination.

Is there a second wave of Corona in India?

The rate at which new patients are growing has to be compared with previous wave of Corona. It can be definitely said that the second wave of corona has arrived in India.

In September, 2020, the number of newly infected patients of Corona was about 25,000 per day. Will this number be the same in the second wave this year?

Yes, it is possible. This is due to carelessness and irresponsible behaviour of the people. The number of new patients in Pune on 25th March, 2021, was more than 3,100. The number of new patients in India on 25th March, 2021 was more than 50,000.

If so, what is the difference in first wave and second wave?

The virus (Corona virus) found in second wave is less harmful (virulent) than it was in first wave. The mortality rate in the second wave is less than 1%. Excluding 5 to 6 districts in the Maharashtra, in rest of Maharashtra mortality rate is less.

What is the reason of second wave of Corona in Maharashtra?

The second wave of Corona has come in Maharashtra due to various aspects. Unseasonal rain and increase in cold, visitors from foreign countries landing at Mumbai. Over and above these facts, irresponsible attitude of the people also has contributed to second wave of corona.

Will the lockdown be useful to stop the second wave of Corona?

Lockdown will stop this second wave temporarily. Lockdown gives times to create and increase basic infrastructure for providing health facilities. As on today, there is remarkable increase in infrastructure for providing health facilities. We all have experienced last year that 'Lockdown' has a huge impact on the social and economic situation of the country. So lockdown is definitely not a solution.

To reduce the speed of second wave of Corona, it is necessary to adopt following things:

- To trace asymptomatic patients;
- Regular check-up and medical tests of the patients who are in home isolation;
- To increase number of fever clinics in the country;
- To trace contact persons and carry out their tests;
- To vaccinate population at a larger scale etc.

These will be effective measures to avoid second wave of Corona.

What will be the effect of vaccination?

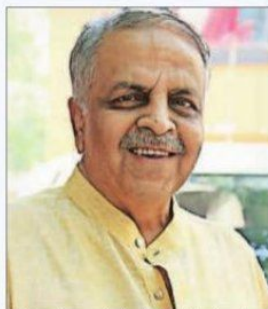
Vaccination certainly has a very important role to play here. The results of surveys conducted by Indian Council of Medical Research have shown that in most places not more than 20% of the population has been infected by the virus. So, only those many people would have attained immunity. Vaccination can rapidly increase the number of people immune to the disease, so that we can quickly reach a stage, where herd immunity starts to play its role.

If so, why vaccination is not done for everyone?

While the trials of vaccines have produced very encouraging results, we still have to be very careful about these. That is because we have data only for a short time. It is important to keep monitoring the impact of these vaccines on those who are receiving it. A very robust monitoring mechanism, what is known as AEFI surveillance, or adverse event following immunisation, is being followed, wherein every adverse event is being carefully scrutinized and investigated. This is called pharmaco-vigilance. This is standard procedure whenever a new drug or vaccine is introduced. Secondly, we must remember that India's population is 130 crore. It is difficult to vaccinate people at large scale.

That is also the reason why there is a lot of documentation required for vaccination right now. As we collect and analyse more and more data from this vaccination drive, we will be more assured about the safety and efficacy of these vaccines. In any case, within a month or two, the vaccination would be open for everyone. But initially, it was important to do it in a phased manner.

Government of India has taken decision to vaccinate people with more than 45 years of age. Is it necessary to take precautions for the people who have already received Corona Vaccine?



Yes. No vaccine is 100% effective. At an individual level, the risk of infection remains even after getting the vaccine, although the probability of this happening is very low. We do not know how long the immunity gained through the vaccines will last. Research on this is still going on and report is awaited. Therefore, it is strongly advised to observe physical distancing, wearing masks, wash hands frequently and maintain personal hygiene.

How long would people have to live with masks?

There are lots of variables that are unknown or uncertain and therefore it is difficult to say at this point. Emergence of new variants, the effectiveness of vaccines against them, the duration of immunity gained through vaccinations are all factors that would decide how long do we need to wear masks, practice physical distancing and following COVID-appropriate behaviour.

Will it be proper to start schools / colleges during this second wave?

It will not be precise to start schools / colleges during this second wave of Corona. If we start schools / colleges, there will be tremendous increase / spread of Corona. The teaching-learning process should be through online system. Since the future career of the students depend on the results of S.S.C. and H.S.C. classes, it will be appropriate to conduct classes of Std. 10th and Std. 12th only on offline basis by observing all the preventive measures. Corona tests of all the teaching and non-teaching staff members should be carried out. It is very important to give vaccination to the teaching and non-teaching staff members on priority basis and also to the people who are suffering from cancer, Blood pressure, Diabetes, T.B. etc. The Schools / Colleges should be conducted in two shifts to avoid crowd.

What can happen after vaccination?

After vaccination, there is a possibility of low fever, body aches, cold, cough. It is necessary to take complete rest and follow the instructions from the medical practitioner. There is no major discomfort in 99% people who are vaccinated.

Is vaccination safe for the people who are suffering from heart disease and who are taking blood thinner medicines?

To thin the blood, medicines viz. 'Aspirin' and 'Clopidogrel' are used. These medicines are mandatory for the patients suffering from heart disease. Vaccination is totally safe for them. If such patients have normal blood pressure, there will not be any trouble after vaccination.

What precautions should be taken in case of diabetic patient?

Diabetes should be totally under control and these people should eat something before vaccination.

Corona patients are increasing rapidly in the cities like Pune, Mumbai, Nagpur, Nashik, Amaravati etc. Whether the lockdown should be imposed in these cities?

Instead of 'Lockdown', it will be helpful if strict restrictions are enacted, as stated below

- Meetings and assemblies should be cancelled
- Presence of only 25-30 people be permitted for marriages.
- To keep Schools / Colleges completely closed
- To work in offices / workshops / shops in two shifts.
- To sanitize public lavatories frequently
- Restrictions should be imposed on the people who are under home isolation and taking treatment.
- To increase fever clinics and corona treatment centres.
- Presence of only 15-20 people be permitted for funeral
- Vaccination should be given to health workers, teaching and non-teaching staff in various Schools and Colleges, bank employees, public sweepers on priority basis.
- Strict restrictions should be imposed for the crowded places e.g. Cinema halls, malls, Gymsnasiums, vegetable and grocery markets etc.

If these measures are adopted by the Government authorities, it will be helpful to control the second wave of corona.

How many cases and deaths were

controlled by nationwide lockdown which was enacted last year?

India underwent a lockdown on March 24, 2020, when just 525 positive cases were detected but the epidemic was already threatening to spread in an exponential manner. The number of cases had crossed 11 000 on March 29, 2020. By 13th April, 2020 number of cases had crossed 28000 cases. The lockdown started to have an impact after 15th April, 2020. Although the number of cases continued to increase at a rapid pace, the growth was no longer exponential.

Various studies have assessed the impact of the lockdown on number of cases and deaths. A Govt. appointed a committee lead by Prof. M. Vidyasagar of IIT, Hyderabad had estimated that in the absence of the lockdown, infections could have risen to more than 140 lacs by the end of June, 2020, and the peak load of active cases could have been around 50 lacs. In reality the total number of infections at the end of June, 2020 was less than 6 lac, which the active cases even at the peak in September, 2020 was just about 10 lacs.

That same Committee has also said that there could have been over 26 lac deaths, if the lockdown had not been imposed. Even if it was imposed with a month's delay i.e. in May 2020, the deaths would have crossed 10 lacs. A year after lockdown the total number of deaths in India have been about 1.6 lakh, with the death rate remaining one of the lowest in the world. Therefore, nationwide lockdown was helpful in reducing number of cases and deaths.

It also helped in improving the health infrastructure across the country.

What is the difference in the situation between April 2020 and April 2021?

There is a lot of difference in the situation which was in April, 2020 and the situation prevailing in April, 2021.

We have a robust infrastructure across the country in April, 2021. Medical faculty at large, has come to the conclusion and the have a strict protocol regimen to treat mild, moderate, severe patient of COVID 19.

Remdesivir is a very important drug which is used in treating moderate disease, is easily available now, at very low price i.e. Rs. 900-1200 per vial. This vial was available for Rs. 5000/- in April, 2020.

What is a real reason for the second wave of Corona?

The second wave of corona is due to fol-

lowing reasons :

- Irresponsible behaviour of people,
- Many people wandering in market places and crowded places do not wear masks or use sanitizers,
- People don't keep physical distancing,
- Mutations in the COVID 19 virus etc.

Is vaccination effective against a mutant virus?

Mutation takes place in virus because of external situations (e.g.) use of antiviral drugs, development of immunity and other external situations.

If the mutation is not extensive, the vaccine is effective against the small mutations of COVID 19 virus. However, if there is a large variation from original Genom Sequence, then the vaccine which is used against original COVID 19 virus will not be effective. Research is going on to crack the mutation in the virus. Various states in our country are also sending their samples to laboratories.

How long the people must take precautions against COVID 19?

COVID 19 virus is going to stay for a long time unless and until large population is vaccinated and in all (clinically or sub-clinically) 60% of our population is infected with the virus. Therefore, for next 2/3 years we will have to follow preventive measures against the COVID 19 virus and also will have to vaccinate people at a large scale very rapidly. The precautions which everybody must undertake are as follows :

Use of sanitizers or soap and frequently cleaning of hands,

Why some patients get infected from COVID 19 virus even after taking vaccine?

If there is a disproportion between antibodies and viral load, the virus take upper hand. This is the reason for occurrence of Corona, even after taking vaccine.

The people should note that they should follow all the precautions against Covid. If a person, comes in contact with COVID 19 infected person, he will get COVID 19 infection, if he is vaccinated just 15 days prior to this contact. Therefore, wearing a mask, observing physical distancing, use of sanitizer and soap are non-pharmacological measures to prevent COVID 19 infection.

