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Questions and Answers on Coronavirus Infection and the COVID-19 Pandemic

(My Preventive Health LLC for Gastroenterology And Nutrition Clinics PC)

1. Question: What is Coronavirus?

Answer: Corona virus is an RNA virus that normally lives in bats. Is a member of the SARS family of viruses, that cause **Severe Acute Respiratory distress Syndrome** or "SARS".

2. How does the Corona Virus enter my body and cause damage?

Answer: As far as we know, the Corona virus enters the body when it comes in contact with *the delicate cells that line the insides of the nose, mouth and throat, and the surface of the eyes*. The virus attaches to specialized particles on the surface cell called ACE-2 receptors. Once the virus gets inside the cell, it multiplies and causes damage to the cell walls, especially the cell walls of the blood vessels in the heart and the lungs. This damage can markedly reduce the ability of the

heart and lungs to function, resulting in lung failure [and the need for a respirator] and heart failure, among other things.

3. Question: What are the early symptoms of coronavirus infection? How would I know if I had it?

Answer: the early symptoms of coronavirus infection can be fairly nonspecific. Coronavirus may presents as a common cold with mild fever and sinus infection, for two weeks or more before more serious symptoms develop. *This long “incubation period” of two weeks or more makes this virus particularly dangerous*, since the infected person can spread the virus to tens, or hundreds of other persons during this period. Other symptoms may include mild abdominal pain and diarrhea, weakness, and a loss of taste for your food.

4. Question: What do you mean by a coronavirus “pandemic”?

Answer: The term “*Pandemic*” is used to describe *a serious infection or illness that spreads rapidly around the world*. As in the case of coronavirus, pandemics may present suddenly in one part of the world, and spread rapidly to other parts of the world, despite efforts to contain the infection or illness. The last known global pandemic was the “Spanish flu” of 1918. *The “Spanish flu” killed approximately one out of every three persons living on the earth*. To give you some perspective on the danger that this pandemic posed, at its height, the *coronavirus pandemic was killing the equivalent of three jet planes filled with patients every day in New York and in Spain*.

5. Question: I have inflammatory bowel disease and take corticosteroids from time to time. Does this put me at increased risk?

Answer: Yes. Your inflammatory bowel disease may place you at increased risk for a poor outcome if you develop a coronavirus infection. The data on *corticosteroids* are mixed. Some scientists suggest discontinuing corticosteroids if you develop a coronavirus infection, because there is some evidence that corticosteroids can cause viral infections in the body to flare. Other scientists are not so sure. If you develop a coronavirus infection, and have to be admitted to a hospital, you should certainly *inform your admitting physician that you are taking corticosteroids*

6. Question: I currently take a “biologic” to manage my inflammatory bowel disease. Am I at increased risk for complications from coronavirus infection?

Answer: Yes. Your *inflammatory bowel disease* is considered a ‘comorbidity’ and may place you at increased risk for a poor outcome if you develop a coronavirus infection. I’m not aware that there any studies at the present time that show that Biologic medications by themselves represent an increased risk for adverse events if you develop coronavirus infection

7. Question: If I'm an immuno-compromised patient and/ or I'm currently receiving treatment for cancer, am I at increased risk for coronavirus infection?

Answer: Yes. 'Cancer' and an 'immuno-compromised status' are considered to be comorbidities. Patients that are immuno-compromised, cancer patients, and patients that are receiving treatment for cancer may be at increased risk for complications and poor outcomes, if they contract a coronavirus infection.

8. Question: My 7 year old son had a nasal swab that tested positive x 2 for coronavirus infection. What precautions should I take at home with this child?

Answer: Unfortunately, children can spread the virus to other children and to adults, even though the children may have no symptoms. Suggest you discuss this with your Pediatrician immediately and ask for guidance. Your Pediatrician will probably suggest that you keep your son at home and away from adults for about 14 days, and that you have your son retested after that time. Spend some time teaching your son personal hygiene, including how to sneeze and blow his nose correctly into his sleeve or a clean tissue, and how to use soap and water to wash his hands thoroughly, including his nails. *It has been documented that stool samples can contain coronavirus for as long as four weeks after the standard coronavirus test is negative.* Therefore, it is important that you disinfect your son's contaminated underwear, and teach your son toilet hygiene, including how to close the toilet seat cover before he flushes the toilet.

9. Question: I am over age 65. Am I at increased risk for coronavirus infection?

Answer: Yes. You may be at increased risk for complications and possibly death from a coronavirus infection if you are over age 65, especially if you have any condition that is known to weaken your immune system, including any of the conditions outlined below (often referred to as "comorbidities"):

10. Question: What medical conditions that can place me at increased risk for coronavirus infection, if I am under age 65?

Answer: You may be at increased risk for complications and possibly death from a coronavirus infection if you have any condition that is known to weaken your immune system, and/ or any of the conditions outlined below (often referred to as "comorbidities"):

- Cancer
- Diabetes
- Hypertension
- Heart disease

- Kidney disease
- Morbid obesity
- Asthma and chronic lung disease
- Inflammatory Bowel Disease
- Lupus, arthritis, and other conditions that are known to stress the immune system

11. Question: I have had all of my influenza shots every year. Does this protect me from coronavirus infection?

Answer: No. Proud that you keep up with your influenza shots, but you are still advised to wear a mask when you go outdoors, and to observe social distancing. You are also advised to follow the CDC [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] guidelines, and to follow the guidelines of your state and local governments regarding the management of your activities during this coronavirus pandemic.

12. Question: Is coronavirus infection a more serious infection than the flu?

Answer: Yes. The coronavirus infection is spread by droplets carried in the air. The virus spreads more easily than the routine flu viruses. One *asymptomatic* person (has no symptoms of the infection) that has the virus can infect tens, to hundreds of other people, before he/ she develops symptoms, and realizes that he/she is infected with the coronavirus. Hence, the caution to avoid parties, weddings, funerals, large church gatherings, movie theatres, and other locations where there may be large crowds of people, until the coronavirus pandemic has been brought under control.

13. Question: I read that I may be at increased risk if I have existing co-morbidities. What do you mean by existing co-morbidities?

Answer: “Comorbidities” refer to age over 65, and illnesses that may place you at increased risk at the time that you contract the coronavirus infection. Some of these conditions and illnesses include:

- Cancer
- age over 65
- Diabetes
- Hypertension
- Heart disease
- Kidney disease
- Morbid obesity
- Asthma and chronic lung disease

- Inflammatory Bowel Disease
- Lupus, arthritis, and other conditions that are known to stress the immune system

14. Question: Are black patients, and patients of color more susceptible to this COVID-19 virus?

Answer: Many Black patients, patients of color, and minority patients in the US have poor health care, resulting in poor overall health and an increased number of the comorbidities listed above. This places black patients and patients of color at increased risk for complications and death from COVID-19 infections. There are no data of which I am aware that demonstrate that black patients and patients of color are genetically more susceptible to the COVID-19 infection. There are plenty of data that demonstrate that when compared with their peers, black patients and patients of color in the US often live in sub-standard housing, and have poor, or no healthcare.

15. Question: Do you recommend that I wear a mask when I go outdoors?

Answer: Yes. Experience in South Korea has shown that you may decrease your risk of contracting coronavirus infection if you wear a mask whenever you are outdoors

16. Question: I am told that I should wear an N95 mask. What is an N95 mask, and how do I obtain one?

Answer: an N 95 mask is a medical grade mask that is meant to filter out most particles that that you breathe in through your nose, including bacteria and viruses, when the mask is properly fitted. You should be aware that the coronavirus is spread via droplets that can be spread through the air. Even if you are wearing an N95 mask, you are advised to shield the mucous membranes of your eyes with glasses or sunglasses if you have to be in close contact with individuals that are coughing or sneezing

17. Question: Is it safe for me to go for walk or to go jogging during a stay-at-home order for the coronavirus pandemic?

Answer: No. We recommend that you exercise at home, or in your backyard if possible, during the stay-at-home coronavirus pandemic emergency orders.

18. Question: What do you mean by social distancing. How far must I stay away from other people?

Answer: "Social distancing" means that you are staying at least 6 feet away from the person to whom you are speaking or with whom you are interacting. For those times when you cannot observe the 6-foot social distancing recommendation, for example, in a grocery store line, you

should wear a mask at all times and remove yourself from the crowded situation as quickly as possible.

19. Question: Can I walk outside to get some sun, or do activities in my backyard during a stay-at-home order?

Answer: Yes, but I suggest you wear a mask when you are outdoors during the coronavirus pandemic. You should try to get 15 minutes or more of the sun every day on your face or on your body. This will help you to maintain your body's vitamin D levels.

20. Question: I clean my hands with an alcohol solution after I flush the toilet. Is that sufficient to protect me from this infection?

Answer: A good commercial alcohol-based hand sanitizer will usually kill 99% of the germs on your hands. Washing the front and back of your hands and under your nails with a commercial soap and water for 45 seconds will also kill most of the germs and minimize your risk of most infections

21. Question: Is washing my hands with soap and water better than using an alcohol solution?

Answer: Most standard commercial alcohol hand sanitizers will kill the majority of germs are present on your hands, assuming that you rub the hand sanitizer on the front and the back of your hands. Washing your hands, front and back, for 45 seconds with soap and clean water is always preferable, if clean running water is available. Be sure to wash under your nails.

22. Question: How do I handle packages of mail after they have been delivered to my house?

Answer: it is okay to lightly wipe the outside of the package with a Clorox or Lysol wipe. Allow the package to dry before you bring it into the house. Try to avoid breathing the fumes from Lysol or Clorox spray

23. Question: How do I handle my mail after it has been placed in my mailbox?

Answer: It is okay to use a glove and give the mail a quick Lysol spray while it is in your garage. Try to avoid breathing the fumes from Lysol or Clorox spray

24. Question: Sometimes I order food to be delivered to my house. What is the best procedure for handling the food that has been delivered?

Answer: I suggest you use a glove and wipe off the handle of the delivery bag with the Clorox or Lysol wipe. You may want to remove your food from the containers that were sent, place the food in your own clean containers, and discard the containers in which the food was delivered. I do not suggest that you spray the food containers with Clorox or Lysol. Try to avoid breathing the fumes from Lysol or Clorox spray

25. Question: I order groceries to be delivered to my house. What is the best procedure for handling the groceries?

Answer: I suggest that you use a glove and wipe off the handle of the delivery bag with the Clorox or Lysol wipe. If you want to, you can wash your groceries under clean, running cold water. I do not suggest that you spray your groceries with Clorox or Lysol

26. Question: Is it safe to visit my mother or grandmother when a stay-at-home order is in place?

Answer: No. Senior citizens are at increased risk if they contract coronavirus infection. Stay in touch with your mother or grandmother via telephone or other social media, and let them know that you love them. You could save their lives.

27. Question: Is it safe to go to church when a stay-at-home order is in place?

Answer: No. Suggest that you check to see if your church broadcast its worship services, and participate from home, until the stay-at-home order has been lifted.

28. Question: Is it safe to go to the supermarket when a stay-at-home order is in place?

Answer: It is preferable that you have your groceries delivered to your door. If you must go to the supermarket for items that you need, wear a mask and maintain social distancing. We suggest that you get in and out of the supermarket as quickly as possible.

29. Question: Is it safe for me to go to the gas station when a stay-at-home order is in place?

Answer: If you have to use your automobile to pick up groceries, or if you have to pick up an order from the pharmacy, it is probably safe to stop at the gas station to put gas in your car or truck, as long as you wear a mask and maintain social distancing.

30. Question: Is it safe for me to go to a restaurant when a stay-at-home order is in place?

Answer: No. It is smarter for you to place an order for the food with a restaurant that has a delivery service and have the restaurant deliver the food order to your door.

31. Question: Am I at increased risk for coronavirus infection if I have kidney failure?

Answer: Yes. Kidney failure is considered a comorbidity. Patients with *Kidney Failure*, and patients on *Dialysis*, are at increased risk for complications and a poor outcome if they contract a coronavirus infection.

32. Am I at increased risk for coronavirus infection if I have heart disease?

Answer: Yes. Patients with *Heart Disease* are at increased risk for complications and a poor outcome if they contract a coronavirus infection.

33. Am I at increased risk for coronavirus infection if I have hypertension

Answer: Yes. Hypertension is considered a comorbidity, and patients with *Hypertension* are at increased risk for complications and a poor outcome if they contract a coronavirus infection.

34. Am I at increased risk for coronavirus infection if I have diabetes

Answer: Yes. Diabetes is considered a comorbidity, and patients with *Diabetes* are at increased risk for complications and a poor outcome if they contract a coronavirus infection.

35. Does obesity placed me at increased risk for coronavirus infection

Answer: as far as I'm aware, there are no controlled studies that show that a slightly elevated BMI by itself is an increased risk factor. However, you should be aware that *Obesity* [BMI greater than 30] by itself increases your risk of *Diabetes, Hypertension, Heart Disease, and Cancer*. All of these conditions are considered "*comorbidities*" and are associated with poor outcomes in patients that contract coronavirus infection.

36. Question: If I have asthma or chronic obstructive lung disease, does this put me at increased risk?

Answer: Yes. *Asthma and chronic lung disease* are increased risk factors for having a poor outcome if you contract a coronavirus infection

37. Question: Is hydroxychloroquine effective for treating this virus?

Answer: We do not know all of the answers to that question as of this writing. Hydroxychloroquine belongs to a class of drugs that have shown promise in treating some classes of viral infections. Recent controlled studies in several medical centers failed to show any benefit to treating the patient with hydroxychloroquine, but studies are continuing.

38. Question: Are there any other medications that I can take to protect me from this virus?

Answer: There are several medications that are being tested in the United States and other countries around the world as treatments for coronavirus infection. As of this writing, no single medication has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration in United States for the treatment of coronavirus infection

39. Question: Should I continue to take vitamin C and my regular vitamins?

Answer: Yes. There is no reason to change the schedule of your medications, your vitamins and supplements at this time, unless you are advised by your doctor to make changes

40. Question: What is the best type of test for me to obtain to determine if I have had a prior coronavirus infection and have recovered?

Answer: as of this writing, the current recommended test for coronavirus infection in the US is a nasopharyngeal swab obtained by an experienced healthcare professional. In this test, a flexible 'Q-tip' is passed through the nose and into the back of the throat to obtain a sample of the virus. A second Q-tip is often used to obtain a sample from the back of the throat. These samples are then sent off to the lab. You will usually obtain a result in 24 to 48 hours, depending on where you are located in the United States. This test will only tell you if you are carrying the coronavirus and is likely to spread the virus to other persons in your surroundings. You need a blood test for coronavirus antibodies to tell you whether you have had a previous infection with coronavirus and have recovered.

41. Question: Are there any existing blood tests that can tell me whether I have been infected with coronavirus in the past?

Answer: Yes. There are blood tests that will check for antibodies to the coronavirus. A positive blood test for antibodies to the coronavirus means that you have had an infection with coronavirus in the past. Unfortunately, at this time, scientists are not sure whether a positive blood test means that you can never get the virus again. Scientists are also not sure at this time whether a positive blood test means that you cannot pass on the virus to another person.

42. Question: What should I do if my (nasal swab) coronavirus test is positive?

Answer: if you have had the standard nasal swab/ throat swab for coronavirus and you are told that your test is positive, you should speak to your doctor immediately, even if you have no symptoms. Telling your doctor or other public health is important so that they can begin the process of notifying all your contacts. Your doctor will probably advise you to wear a mask, isolate yourself from your family members and workmates for about 14 days, and rest in place at home during this time. You should also practice good hygiene, including strict handwashing. If you develop increasing symptoms of cough, fever, diarrhea, weakness or abdominal pain, you should notify your doctor immediately.

43. Question: What are the most important signs to watch for if I have a positive Corona virus test and am quarantined?

Answer: The corona virus **damages your lungs and decreases the amount of oxygen that the blood is carrying to your brain, heart and other vital organs.** The blood oxygen level decreases (normal is 95-100) and your heart rate increases (normal Pulse rate is 50-90). These changes can be picked up by a tiny instrument called an **Oximeter**, that is normally placed on your finger. If you become infected with Corona virus (a documented positive test), I would strongly suggest that you buy an Oximeter. Check and record your "Pulse Oxygen" and your Heart rate twice per day. **If you notice your oxygen level is decreasing and/ or your heart rate is increasing, call your doctor immediately, even if you are feeling well.** You may save your life.

*Dr. Layne encourages you to stay in touch with the updated recommendations from the CDC, the World Health Organization, your State and local health authorities. The opinions expressed in this document are the opinions of the author, and are based on a careful review of the existing medical literature. Please feel free to send your questions, comments and recommendations to: doc@MyPreventiveHealth.com
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