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Health Ministry issues post COVID-19 management protocol

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A holistic approach is required for follow up care and well-being of all post- COVID recovering patients



Government of India is leading the COVID-19 response and management in the country in close coordination and collaboration with the State/UT governments. Several strategic and calibrated measures have been taken for the prevention, containment and management of COVID-19.

It has been observed that after acute COVID-19 illness, recovered patients may continue to report wide variety of signs and symptoms including fatigue, body ache, cough, sore throat, difficulty in breathing, etc. The recovery period is likely to be longer for patients who suffered from more severe form of the disease and those with pre-existing illness.

A holistic approach is required for follow up care and well-being of all post- COVID recovering patients. Heeding to this, the Union Health Ministry has issued a Post COVID Management Protocol. This provides an integrated holistic approach for managing patients who have recovered enough from COVID for care at home.

The Protocol is not meant to be used as a preventive / curative therapy.

1. **At the individual level**
    - Continue COVID appropriate behaviour (use of mask, hand & respiratory hygiene, physical distancing).
    - Drink adequate amount of warm water (if not contra-indicated).
    - Take immunity promoting AYUSH medicine -To be practiced and prescribed by a qualified practitioner of AYUSH.
    - If health permits, regular household work to be done. Professional work to be resumed in graded manner.
    - Mild/ moderate exercise

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        - Daily practice of Yogasana, Pranayama and Meditation, as much as health permits or as prescribed.
        - Breathing exercises as prescribed by treating physician.
        - Daily morning or evening walk at a comfortable pace as tolerated.

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    - Balanced nutritious diet, preferably easy to digest freshly cooked soft diet.
    - Have adequate sleep and rest.
    - Avoid smoking and consumption of alcohol.
    - Take regular medications as advised for COVID and also for managing comorbidities, if any. Doctor to be always informed about all medicines that the individual is taking (allopathic/AYUSH) so as to avoid prescription interaction.
    - Self-health monitoring at home - temperature, blood pressure, blood sugar (especially, if diabetic), pulse oximetry etc. (if medically advised)
    - If there is persistent dry cough / sore throat, do saline gargles and take steam inhalation. The addition of herbs/spices for gargling/steam inhalation. Cough medications, should be taken on advice of medical doctor or qualified practitioner of Ayush.
    - Look for early warning signs like high grade fever, breathlessness, $Sp0_2$ < 95%, unexplained chest pain, new onset of confusion, focal weakness.

2. **At the level of community**
    - Recovered individuals to share their positive experiences with their friends and relatives using social media, community leaders, opinion leaders, religious leaders for creating awareness, dispelling myths and stigma.
    - Take support of community based self-help groups, civil society organizations, and qualified professionals for recovery and rehabilitation process (medical, social, occupational, livelihood).
    - Seek psycho-social support from peers, community health workers, counsellor. If required seek mental health support service.
    - Participate in group sessions of Yoga, Meditation etc. while taking all due precautions like physical distancing.

3. In healthcare facility setting

- The first follow-up visit (physical/telephonic) should be within 7 days after discharge, preferably at the hospital where he/she underwent treatment.

- Subsequent treatment/follow up visits may be with the nearest qualified allopathic/AYUSH practitioner/medical facility of other systems of medicine. Poly-therapy is to be avoided due to potential for unknown drug-drug interaction, which may lead to Serious Adverse Events (SAE) or Adverse Effects (AE).
- The patients who had undergone home isolation, if they complain of persisting symptoms, will visit the nearest health facility.
- Severe cases requiring critical care support will require more stringent follow up.