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WHAT IS CORONAVIRUS? WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease of the respiratory system caused by the novel coronavirus.

The disease, which could be experienced only as mild symptoms by many of the patients, necessitates hospitalization and oxygen therapy in fourteen out of each 100 patients and treatment in intensive care unit in five out of each 100 patients.

The symptoms and course of the disease might differ in children, young adults and older adults. Fever, cough and shortness of breath are the most common symptoms of the disease, and fatigue, diarrhea and sore throat may also be observed. **At older ages, fever may not always be seen and symptoms like altered state of consciousness (confusion), difficult to arouse/tendency to sleep, purplish discoloration around the lips and chest pain/pressure like discomfort in the chest may be experienced. Due to the weakened immune system and increase in the number of the underlying chronic diseases at older ages, the illness might be severe.**

WHY DOES THE CORONAVIRUS MOSTLY AFFECT OLDER POPULATION?

Unfortunately, the novel coronavirus infection which has influenced the whole world and lead to a pandemic (*Pandemic, is the general term given to epidemics that spread over a wide area in multiple countries or continents of the world*) affects the elderly population the most.

Our population is rapidly getting older (9.1%). THE AGING PLATFORM which aims to help older adults continue living independently and live a more active and healthy life by increasing their quality of life, advises older people to follow the recommendations of the Ministry of Health these days and stay at home as much as possible.

It should be known that for especially older adults, the most important way to prevent getting sick during this outbreak, for which there is no known treatment or vaccine yet, is to stay at home, to avoid close contact with others, not to accept any visitors, to reduce interpersonal relationships (social isolation / physical distancing).

It should not be forgotten that the current curfew for people aged 65 or older is not because the older people spread the virus, but to prevent the virus from infecting them, with the purposes of protection and prevention. As you know, presence of one or more chronic diseases with advancing age make it difficult for the immune system to cope with an additional infectious disease. For this reason, coronavirus infection may lead to severe illness in older adults. Therefore, we want our old people to “*stay at their homes*”.

At the beginning of the pandemic, due to the focus on the older people, the perception among the society and especially the older population was disturbing. It should not be forgotten that it is important to treat someone as we would want to be treated, to empathize (to put ourselves in the shoes of that person) and to behave knowing that emotional sensitivity increases in old age.

Additionally, it should be known that not only people over the age of 65, but everyone should pay attention to social isolation, and everyone should be warned about this issue regardless of age. It is especially important to support older people who live alone, who have physical mobility limitations and chronic diseases. Considering that this population might have difficulties in accessing information and services, the importance of this support is gradually increasing.

However, during staying at home; it is important for individuals aged 65 and over to continue their lives without being isolated from the society and preventing the development of further problems.

For this; we have some suggestions about the issues that strengthening the immune system, physical activity, ways to protect against the virus, helping older people living alone, helping older people living with their families.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STRENGTHENING THE IMMUNE SYSTEM FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Immune system is the living being's own defense system, which recognizes and tries to destroy every factor that threatens the organism. Having a strong immune system prevents getting infected and, in case of disease development, it facilitates the recovery process. The quality and / or quantity of immune cells (especially white blood cells) decrease in old age. In addition, recognition of the receptors and associated immune response may be delayed or even may not occur in old age. In those whose immune system is not strong enough, it is faster and easier for the Coronavirus which is the cause of the current outbreak to spread throughout the body. For protecting from Coronavirus, to strengthen the immune system with natural methods is important. Factors that suppress and weaken the immune system are wrong nutritional habits, sedentary life, smoking-alcohol use, inadequate sleep and stress.

Therefore;

- They should eat a balanced and sufficient diet. In this context, by our senior older adults; plenty of fruits and vegetables should be consumed, plenty of fluids should be drunk, all vitamins, especially rich in vitamins C, A, D and E should be included in the diet. In addition, beta glucans should be directly come into mind for the immune system-nutrition relationship (beta glucans stimulate immune cells). These elements are abundant in foods such as oats, barley, yeast and mushrooms. Zinc is also a mineral that works directly with the immune system. Pumpkin seeds, beans, seafood, sunflower seeds, meat and tahini are among the foods rich in zinc and should definitely be included in the diet.

- Regular exercise / movement should be done. Exercise provides activation of immune cells. Especially, our senior older adults should be supported in performing the indoor activities / exercises mentioned below.
- Smoking and alcohol use reduces the production and activity of immune cells. Therefore, smoking and alcohol use should be avoided. Furthermore, smoking increases tendency to lung infections, makes these infections difficult to heal, and facilitates the development of further problems (complications).
- Regular sleep and rest should be ensured. Especially in accordance with the biological clock, a good quality sleep should be maintained between 23.00 and 07.00. Sleep hygiene practices such as eating dinner between 18.00-19.00, not eating junk food at night, not consuming fluids after 18.00, making sure the temperature of the sleeping room not to be too hot or too cold, not doing physical and mental activities close to bedtime should be followed.
- You should recognize the conditions that trigger stress in your life and avoid them as much as possible or learn the proper techniques to cope with stress. You can also get counseling on stress coping techniques when necessary.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR THE OLDER PEOPLE

Lack of physical activity in the older people affects physical performance and functions negatively. Due to aging process, the ability to perform a movement is impaired as a result of decreased function in sensory systems and central structures, any of the sensory receptors contain insufficient or incomplete information and any disorder affecting the organization of messages. Due to these physiological changes, the sedentary lifestyle increases with age, and older adults spend 65% to 80% of their time sitting. This decrease in physical activity causes negative effects on cardio-metabolic health, muscle-tendon health, functional fitness, physical independence and body composition.

In the physical activity directive published by the World Health Organization in 2010, the definition of physical activity and exercise plan for individuals aged 65 years and older is as follows:

Physical activity for individuals 65 years and older is that; The activities that take place during the day and in common or collectively with the family, including entertainment activities, leisure activities, activities for transportation from one place to another (walking and cycling), professional activities, housework, various games and sports or planned exercise activities.

1. Individuals aged 65 years and older should perform at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity or 75 minutes of high-intensity aerobic physical activity per week. This program can be planned as an equal duration for moderate and high intensity physical activities within a week.

2. Aerobic activities should be performed in at least 10 minutes sessions.

3. In order to get better results from exercise, weekly moderate-intensity physical activity time should be increased to 300 minutes and high intensity physical activity time to 150 minutes. Moderate-intensity physical activity and high-intensity physical activity can also be performed on an equal basis, while the total duration does not change.

4. Individuals with impaired mobility should do physical activity at least 3 days a week in order to increase their balance and avoid falls.

5. Individuals whose physical activities are deemed to be harmful for their health should be as active as possible in limits of their health conditions.

Exercise programs for the older adults helps improvement of physical fitness, agility, muscle strength, flexibility, bone health, cardiovascular and respiratory functions, and activity tolerance. On top of these, exercise has been shown to provide social and psychological benefits that affect the quality of life and sense of well-being of the older adults. The increase in strength and functional capacity of the older adults who participate in regular exercise programs in those who are physically active

throughout their life (walking, athletics, gardening, etc.) is faster and stronger than those who are sedentary.

With regular and lifelong exercise programs, it has been reported that the reduction in physical capacity of older people can be delayed. The benefits of physical activity and exercise in the older people are:

1. Increased muscle strength and flexibility,
2. Prevention of fracture risk due to decreased bone loss and increased bone mineral amount,
3. Decrease in obesity and increase in lean body mass,
4. Increased glucose tolerance,
5. Increased high density lipoprotein (HDL) and decreased lipid concentrations,
6. Decrease in vascular resistance,
7. Increased maximum aerobic capacity and respiratory functions,
8. Improved cardiovascular function and decrease in risk of diseases,
9. Increased physical performance, functional capacity and psychomotor skills,
10. Increased mental activities as a result of oxygenation of the brain and increased alertness,
11. Reduced anxiety and depression and improved sleep quality,
12. Increase in state of well-being.
13. Prolongation of life and increase in quality of life

There is evidence that exercise training for older individuals has various benefits to improve physical functions, cardiovascular risk factors, the risk of death due to all causes, and overall quality of life.

Exercise training should be adjusted individually according to goals and abilities of each person. Ideal exercise training should include components of aerobics, resistance, flexibility and balance exercises. Furthermore, to achieve the maximum benefit it should include adequate intensity and duration.

For a healthy and active aging, it is very important to start exercises in the earliest period of life, if possible in the very first years of life, and to continue to proper exercise training in childhood, youth, adulthood and middle age periods in parallel to growth.

PROTECTION OF CORONAVIRUS FOR ELDERLY PEOPLE



Stay at home.



Do not accept visitors.



Do not enter in crowd.



Avoid close contact.



When communicating, Make sure that there is at least 1,5 metres distance.



Wash your hands frequently with water and soap for 20 seconds.



Cover your mouth and with a cloth tissue when you cough or sneeze, or use inside of your elbow.



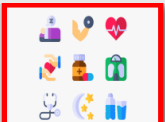
Ventilate your places of living frequently



Check yourself for the symptoms of the disease



Admit to the closest healthcare facility with your mask if you have signs like fever, cough and trouble breathing.



Maintain a healthy lifestyle: eat enough, get enough sleep, do not smoke and be active.



Avoid eating raw or undercooked animal products, prefer well-cooked foods



Try hard to be mobilized at home and deal with new hobbies.



Clean and disinfect frequently used items.



Keep your regularly used medications at home for at least a month



Check for the sufficiency of basic supplies and foods.



Make phone calls to your beloved's and talk them frequently.



Save the phone number to call in case of emergency.

9 WAYS OF PROTECTION FROM CORONAVIRUS FOR 60+ ELDERLY

First of all, you should take all possible measures to prevent the virus from infecting you.

1- Follow the general hygiene rules recommended by the World Health Organization and the Ministry of Health.

- ✓ Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before and after cooking, using the bathroom/toilet, or after everything you have touched in public places. In the absence of soap and water, clean with alcohol-based hand gels.
- ✓ You should cover your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when coughing and sneezing, and the inside of the elbow should be used if you do not have a paper tissue.
- ✓ Avoid contact with mouth, nose, and eyes with unwashed hands.
- ✓ Do not share personal items such as plates, glasses, spoons, towels with other people.
- ✓ Keep clean the items you regularly use (phone, remote control etc.) and wipe them with a refreshing towel frequently.
- ✓ Ventilate your living areas frequently.
- ✓ Wash your clothes at a temperature of at least 60 °C.
- ✓ Clean frequently used surfaces with detergent water every day, such as door handles, sinks, electrical switches.

2- If you are on regular prescribed medication, continue these medications. Thus you prevent other health issues.

3- Adopt a healthy lifestyle to strengthen your immune system. Do not forget the importance of health for a strong body and mind.

- ✓ Eat a balanced diet and healthy food.
- ✓ Avoid eating raw and undercooked products and prefer well-cooked foods.
- ✓ Eat one vegetable meal at least in a day.

- ✓ Try to consume fruits and vegetables which contain high levels of vitamin C, such as fresh red pepper, green pepper, cauliflower, rosehip, lemon, orange, kiwi.
- ✓ If you order delivery food, do not prefer raw meal (sandwiches, salads, etc.). Prefer meals cooked at high temperatures.
- ✓ Do not forget to drink enough fluids. If you do not have a health problem (such as heart failure, kidney failure) that prevents you from drinking plenty of fluids, increase your daily fluid consumption.
- ✓ Get enough sleep. Try to wake up and sleep at the same time every day.
- ✓ Do not smoke.
- ✓ Do simple exercises. Try to be active at home and make new hobbies. Do not spend long hours immobile in front of the television. Continue your housework such as daily cooking and cleaning without exhausting yourself. This will distract your mind and help protect your mental health.

4- *Leave a distance of at least 1.5 meters between you and other people and avoid social contact (embrace, handshake etc.).*

- ✓ An important way to reduce the risk of encountering coronavirus is to limit face-to-face visits. For this reason, do not accept guests for a while.
- ✓ It is important not to physically contact unless necessary. Teens and adults can be carriers of the coronavirus and transmit the virus to you unintentionally. Therefore, both physical and social contact should be avoided.
- ✓ Certainly, this situation could be challenging for the elderly who spend their time with their families or neighbors. However, it should not be forgotten that staying away from social contact does not mean isolation or loneliness.

5- *Do not use public transport and go to crowded places unless necessary, stay at home as much as possible.*

6- *Check if the medications you use regularly are adequate for at least one month.*

- ✓ Check also other medical supplies that you may need.
- ✓ The duration of the medication reports has been extended, you can get your medications directly from your pharmacist without a prescription.
- ✓ If you have difficulty in getting or accessing the medicine, contact your family physician or pharmacist by phone.

7- *Keep in touch with your family, friends or neighbors.*

- ✓ You may need to ask for help if you get ill.
- ✓ Frequently talking to your family, neighbors, and loved ones by phone, may help you feel less alone. Learn how to take part in a video chat using smartphones, laptops or tablets.
- ✓ Call your family members, neighbors and loved ones who can help you and ask them for help with shopping, withdrawing money, depositing bills, preparing food and providing medicines. Do not hesitate to ask for help.
- ✓ For emergency situations, keep the phone of a family doctor, building manager, a neighbor or a neighborhood headman near at hand.
- ✓ To order by phone, find and record the market, butcher and pharmacy phone numbers which are near you.
- ✓ If you do not have any relatives or they live far away, call Alo 184 and 112 phone numbers first and ask the government for help.

8- *Find out which delivery services are available in your area*

- ✓ Municipalities, governorates and district governorships set up groups for assistance. Follow those information on TV and ask for help.
- ✓ Do not believe anyone who comes to your door and says they come from the charity. Ask for an identity, if you suspect, close your door and ask your neighbors for help. In such cases, be wary of people who want a signature.
- ✓ Please note that you can access public services through the e-government portal and other digital Turkey platforms without leaving home.

- ✓ Follow the announcements of the official authorities and strictly observe the precautions taken for your health.
 - ✓ Ask for help from 112 Vefa Social Support Line by phone for all your domestic and foreign needs such as shopping, depositing, taking medicines.
 - ✓ Please note that you can also call 155 and 156 to get help.
- 9- Check if you have the symptoms of the disease. In this case, it is very important as it will provide early diagnosis of the disease.
- ✓ If you have complaints such as fever, cough, respiratory distress, you should definitely call the Ministry of Health Communication Center (SABİM), Alo 184 hotline and get information.
 - ✓ If you are going to get out because of having an illness, wear a mask and make an appointment, then apply to health institutions without using public transport, .
 - ✓ If you are being discharged from the hospital with a corona virus treatment or if your home treatment continues, make sure you take the medication given on time and obey the isolation rules for 14 days. Inform your family physician who is calling you correctly.

NINE WAYS TO HELP OLDER PEOPLE LIVING ALONE AT HOME

It is very important to support older people especially who live alone, have limited mobility and have chronic diseases. Taking into account that this population will have difficulties in accessing information and services, this support is getting more important.

1. Call them frequently, make at least short conversations and avoid visiting at home. Provide accurate information about current situation by talking about positive news but avoiding anxious, negative and disaster news.
2. If you will, visit them keeping your distance at least 1,5 meters, avoiding making any contact like hugging and shaking hands and wearing a face mask.

3. Check and buy necessary foods and requirements.
4. Check whether the medications they regularly use are sufficient for at least 1 month and provide them.
5. Help them communicate with doctors, neighbors, friends and their families when necessary.
6. Remind that they should wash their hands frequently; keep clean the frequently used items and objects like phone, door handles and not to have physical contact with sick people
7. Plan what to do and how you will get them to the health unit when they get sick.
8. Encourage them about balanced diet, regular sleep, not to smoke and being active to maintain a healthy lifestyle
9. Be kind and empathize when you are talking with them. Listen to them with clemency and help them to deal with stress.

NINE WAYS TO HELP OLDER PEOPLE LIVING WITH THEIR FAMILIES

1. Observe them for coronavirus symptoms, such as fever, cough, and respiratory distress.
2. If someone, living at the same home, shows these symptoms, prevent them from physical contact and seek medical advice.
3. Encourage them about balanced diet, regular sleep, not to smoke and being active to maintain a healthy lifestyle
4. Ventilate and clean the house regularly.
5. Do not share personal items such as plates, glasses, spoons and towels.
6. Check whether the medications they regularly use are sufficient for at least 1 month.
7. Avoid them staying at crowded places.
8. If you need to bring them to a doctor, don't use public transport and dress face mask.
9. Be polite and respectful and empathize.

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