

COVID-19: Experts suggest segregation of garbage as important step to contain spread

Amid the Coronavirus pandemic, experts believe that waste disposal and segregation of waste is a significant precaution/step to contain the COVID-19 spread

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The world today is facing an unprecedented crisis as it battles the COVID-19 virus. In an attempt to break the chain of transmission - as the virus is believed to spread through surface contact - several countries across the globe have imposed a complete lockdown bringing the world to a near standstill. Amid this crisis and the attempts to battle it, experts believe that waste disposal and segregation of waste is a significant precaution/step to contain the virus' spread.

Need for segregation of garbage

Leading environmentalists, scientists and medical doctors in India have suggested that ensuring segregation of waste will not only reduce dumping of waste in landfills, but also play a 'crucial' role in containing COVID-19. Experts have advised that common citizens should dispose garbage in three categories -

1. Bio-medical waste (Tissues, masks, gloves, sanitizer bottles)
2. Recyclables (metal cans, all PET/HDPE plastic bottles and other heavy plastic objects)
3. Compostable (food and other organic waste)

Padma Shri awardee Scientist Prof. GD Yadav reasons that close to 60% of the world population is

anticipated to be infected but in addition, to follow the guidelines issued by health authorities, certain safety measures including the disposal of garbage can also bear fruits.

"We must dispose our gloves, masks, sanitizer bottles, tissue papers responsibly so these items are collected and treated/recycled to contain the infection," he said. Professor Yadav also stated that the infection can come from anywhere, reusable items such as cups, glasses should be avoided at restaurants/public places and single-use plastics which are highly recycled in India should be preferred for the time being. "

Adding to Professor Yadav's views, Dr V Ramasubramanian, Infectious Diseases Expert, Apollo Hospitals, stated that there should be no handling of garbage with bare hands.

"Municipal workers, waste pickers need gloves. General public should also ensure that they segregate waste at source, reducing the need for municipal workers to touch and separate waste manually, which would expose them to infections," he said.

Furthermore, he added, "Scientifically, gloves/masks should be incinerated post usages but since it can't be practised at every household, hence there should be a different garbage bag to dispose household biomedical waste such as used tissues, gloves etc. especially during the current outbreak."

Dr. Deepak Saxena, Medical Expert on Public Health and Professor, **Indian Institute of Public Health**, reiterated that communities need to dispose their used napkins, tissues, empty sanitizer bottles in a separate bag, to ensure the safety of municipal workers and ragpickers. "The government should also provide safety kits to municipal workers urgently and educate them on how to handle household waste during the outbreak, to help in halting the chain of transmission," he added.

Meanwhile, Professor Arun Sawant, Former Vice-Chancellor of Mumbai University and Rajasthan University, stated that scientific/medical information about COVID-19 must be mass-circulated to make informed decisions. He stated, "The recycling process is really important for the environment, and we shouldn't suddenly forsake that because of all the fear around this particular issue."

Apart from this, health authorities have emphasised on the need for social distancing as a major step in an attempt to curb the spread of the virus. Authorities have also signified the necessity to wash/sanitize hands every 30 minutes. Other precautions include avoiding touching the face and also covering mouth while sneezing/coughing.

<https://m.republicworld.com/india-news/general-news/covid-19-experts-suggest-segregation-of-garbage-as-important-step-to.html>