

# IIPHG Newsletter



INDIAN  
INSTITUTE OF  
PUBLIC HEALTH  
GANDHINAGAR

## Nutrition in COVID-19

Periodic e-Newsletter  
Issue III - October 2020

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COVID CARE COMMITTEE



Dear Colleagues,

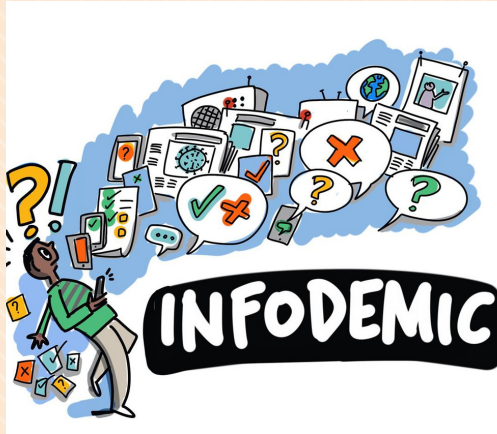
We are happy to release the COVID-19 Special newsletter. This issue of the newsletter focuses on the theme "Nutrition." COVID-19 pandemic has fueled parallel epidemic of rumours, misinformation, information overload primarily driven by social media. It is impacting individual and community compliance to COVID-19 including nutrition practices. A wave of nutritional myths is raising concerns amongst public health practitioners. At one end, consumption of vitamins and minerals without prescription is a concern while at the other hand lack of access to food and nutritional services to vulnerable population (children, pregnant & lactating women and adolescent girls) is worrisome.

In this issue, we attempt to highlight key issues relevant to Nutrition, positive story and IIPHG's contribution to address COVID-19. Hope you enjoy reading this newsletter. I invite all to share your contribution for the next issue on "Mental Health and COVID-19."

Dr. Shyam Pingle,  
Chair, COVID CARE COMMITTEE

p.1

# COVID-19 INFODEMIC: Need to fight parallel pandemic



Infodemic is defined as “an overabundance of information—some accurate and some not.” The term was coined to categorize some of the common features of rumors, stigma, and conspiracy theories during public health emergencies.

Recent study published in October 2020 indicated that misinformation fueled by rumors, stigma, and conspiracy theories impacting individual and community compliance to COVID-19 precautions.

Source: Islam, M. S., Sarkar, T., Khan, S. H., Mostofa Kamal, A. H., Hasan, S. M., Kabir, A., ... & Chughtai, A. A. (2020). COVID-19-related infodemic and its impact on public health: A global social media analysis. The American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, tpmd200812.

Considering adverse impact of COVID-19 related infodemic, WHO has launched training on "infodemic" to train professionals to address "infodemic" in respective countries.

Online training over 4 weeks in November 2020

Deadline for submission: 18 October 2020, 18:00 CET

Those who are interested to participate in the training, check WHO website for more details.

## Nutritional Myths Associated with COVID-19

- There is currently no evidence that food either causes or prevents us from COVID-19. Food only helps us to build a strong immunity that can withstand any infection.
- Evidences suggest that nutrients like Vitamin D, Vitamin C and Zinc have protective effects against acute respiratory illness and also reduces hospital stay.
- One should therefore try to consume foods rich in these nutrients. Effect of one nutrient in our body is dependent upon the availability of other nutrients as well. Hence, to stay fit and healthy a balanced diet is required.

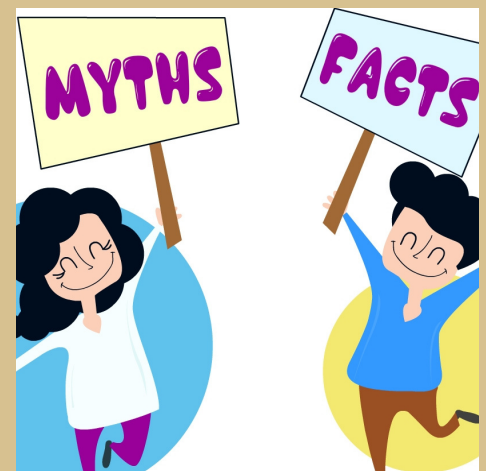
Source: WHO



Government has issued :

- SOP on preventive measures to be followed in Entertainment Parks and similar places to contain spread of COVID-19
- SOP on celebrating festivals. No celebrations activities will be allowed inside any COVID-19 containment zones in the country during the upcoming festival season

Source: [www.mohfw.gov.in/](http://www.mohfw.gov.in/)





# Geriatric Nutrition and COVID 19

With increasing age, food intake, physical activity and resistance towards infections are decreased. People above 60 years of age are at a higher risk of developing COVID-19 infection. And elderly with co-morbid conditions are even at greater risk.

Nutrition helps improve immunity. Hence, elderly people with or without medical conditions should ensure adequate nutritional intake along with precautions and timely medical care when needed. Detailed guidance is available in following sources.



## Sources:

1. World Health Organization. (2020). Addressing noncommunicable diseases in the COVID-19 response.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). Older Adults. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/older-adults.html>

**Optimal nutrition and dietary nutrient intake impact the immune system, therefore, sustainable way to survive in COVID-19 context is to strengthen the immune system.**

## Food Security in response to COVID 19



1. Government decision for exempting agriculture farm and supply of food from lockdown norms has created a positive impact on the citizens of the country; however, food insecurity of certain section of vulnerable populations was challenging to address.
2. Kerala addressed food insecurity of vulnerable children by engaging anganwadi workers in supplying meals to children registered under ICDS.
3. In Karnataka, technological intervention (food security mobile application) helped to reach out to economically vulnerable population with food.

Such initiatives are appreciated and should be replicated. Addressing food insecurity is important.

Source : Local food systems and COVID-19; A glimpse on India's responses. By Pramitha Elizabeth Pothan  
A brief on food security and COVID 19 in India <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/agriculture/brief/food-security-and-covid-19>

# Breast feeding and COVID-19



- All mothers whether COVID-19 positive or not should continue breastfeeding their child with precautions.
- If a mother is COVID-19 positive, breastfeeding should be continued with preventive measures:

1. Follow respiratory hygiene.
2. Wear a mask/cloth while breastfeeding.
3. Wash your hands for 40 seconds before breast feeding.
4. Feed the expressed breast milk with cup in case the mother is too sick to breastfeed.

Sources:

- Essential Nutrition Practices During COVID-19 Pandemic (CoE-SAM, India)
- UNICEF and USAID. Counselling card Infant and Young Child Feeding Recommendations When COVID-19 is Suspected or Confirmed: Recommended Practice Booklet, April 2020& MOHFW COVID Guidelines

## Immunity Boosters

Micronutrients essential to fight infection include vitamins A, B, C, D, and E, and the minerals iron, selenium, and zinc. Following nutrition inputs are recommended to improve immunity:

- Fruits such as Pomegranate, Papaya, Guava, Amla contains vitamins, mineral and enzymes
- Turmeric, Garlic and Ginger contains curcumin, anti-inflammatory and antiviral properties as well as antioxidant properties respectively
- Dry fruits such as – Walnuts, Brown Raisins and Almonds contains protein, fibre, vitamin E
- Green Leafy Vegetables – contains flavonoids that act as antioxidants



**Focus on eating a variety of foods within each of the basic food groups to boost your intake of vitamins and minerals.**



# Nutrition and COVID-19 Related Resources



- Prevention, Early Detection and Treatment of Wasting in Children 0-59 Months through National Health Systems in the Context of COVID-19 (UNICEF and WHO, 2020).
- Essential Nutrition related Interventions during COVID-19 Outbreak (MoHFW, GoI, 2020) .
- POSHAN COVID-19 resources (UN agencies and IIT-B).
- The 2020 Global Nutrition Report in the context of COVID-19.
- The 2020 state of food security and nutrition in the world in the context of COVID-19.
- Global nutrition webinars focusing on programme adaptations in the context of COVID-19. [Tech RRT and Global Technical Assistance Mechanism for Nutrition (GTAM)]

## Story of a Courageous Survivor

**I Am A  
CORONA  
SURVIVOR**

Experience of being a survivor of COVID-19 altered my perspective. Few days back I got tested positive for COVID-19 and I am recovered. I am sharing lessons I learned.

- Don't let this disease dominate you, don't be afraid of it!
- Get yourself tested as soon as you show symptoms or you accidentally get exposed.
- Trust your doctors and public health facilities.
- Stay connected with others through calls, and chats.
- Spread positivity and support others.
- Do not self-stigmatize yourself. Reach out for help at right time.

Thanks to everyone who encouraged me. Let us together spread positivity, not virus and fears.

- Dr. Vishakha Bharati, MPH Student

# Contributions by IIPHG

- IIPHG coordinated state level nutrition partners meet organized by WeCan in April 2020.
- Prof. Dileep Mavalankar , Director IIPHG talked about new research on effectiveness of Vitamin D on COVID 19. Video is available on IIPHG's YouTube page.
- Dr. Shyam Pingle, Senior Occupational Specialist and Adjunct Professor published an article, "Occupational Health for Healthcare Workers in COVID-19 Era" in Industrial Safety Chronicle.
- Dr Tapasvi Puwar, Associate Professor IIPHG and Khushi Kansara, a PhD scholar wrote a blog on "COVID-19 Crisis and Malnutrition Among Children" at Peditascene.
- Dr. Ritu Rana
  - Participated in a 'connecting conversation' podcast organised by Global Technical Assistance Mechanism for Nutrition and Emergency Nutrition Network on how programmes are adapting in light of COVID-19: Implementing the Family MUAC approach in Gambella, Ethiopia.
  - Wrote an opinion piece, "Impacts of not breastfeeding on human health and on the health of the \ planet," for WeCan special edition newsletter for Breastfeeding Week.
  - Contributed to a newspaper article in Times of India on COVID 19 and Vitamin D deficiency in India
  - Published a paper titled, "Leaving no one behind: Community Management of At-risk Mothers and Infants under six months (MAMI) in the context of COVID-19 in Gambella refugee camps, Ethiopia."
- IIPHG celebrated National Nutrition Month 2020 virtually by organizing 3 different activities: (i) Recipe Competition, (ii) Quiz on Nutrition Myths and Facts and (iii) Quiz on General Nutrition on 6th September 2020.

## Videos published

- Short video on “Nutrition and COVID 19” prepared by Research Assistant Ms. Priyanka Shah and PhD Scholar Ms. Khushi Kansara.
- Video on "Cradle Hold" breastfeeding technique with information on breastfeeding during COVID 19” was prepared by PhD Scholar Ms. Khushi Kansara and Research Assistant Ms. Priyanka Shah.
- Video on "Role of vitamin C and Zinc in COVID 19" prepared by Khushi Kansara, PhD Scholar IIPHG.



## About Next Issue

We invite every one to contribute to our next newsletter on the theme Mental Health in COVID-19. Brief details of any new project or publication are welcome.

Kindly send your contribution to Dr. Apurva kumar Pandya at [apandya@iiphg.org](mailto:apandya@iiphg.org) on or before 31st October 2020.