

On the Virus gone Viral

By Dr. Connie



Coronavirus, now renamed Covid-19, is a virus that has gone viral, both through internet communication and other news reporting, and, physiologically through the apparent ease of transmission from one body to another.

Viral internet reporting pointed at first to snakes or bats from the Wuhan seafood and wild animal market, then to the pangolin (an endangered species illegally trafficked for Chinese medicine), and to wildfire speculation re the Wuhan virology laboratory, and to elaborate conspiracy theories. The harsh reality of the consequences of contracting the virus has generated widespread fear and further speculation. **At this point, given the general atmosphere of distrust of both media and government, foreign and domestic, it is virtually impossible to ascertain the facts with regards to this virus.**

What we do know is that Covid-19 is a corona virus, named after the crown like appearance of the virus. **There are at least 7 known types of corona viruses that impact humans.** 15-30% of common colds are associated with corona viruses OC43 and 229E, and various corona viruses are responsible for some cases of viral pneumonia. SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) and MERS (middle east respiratory syndrome) are also corona virus illnesses.

We also know that it is virtually impossible to contain the virus. The apparent period of contagion is up to 12.5 days or more before symptoms appear. Transmission is through respiratory droplets from coughing or sneezing, and is generally transmitted by close personal contact, rather than from touching a surface and then touching your own mouth, nose, or eyes. The virus can, however, live on metal, glass or plastic surfaces for up to 9 days, though the average is 4 to 5 days, (versus 48 hours for the common flu virus and 2 hours for the measles). Low temps and high humidity increase the life span. Antibodies against the virus don't last long, so one can be affected again in as little as 4 months.

So how are you to protect yourself against this virus?

Obviously, you would want to avoid contact with symptomatic persons, as you would with any virus. Insist that your loved ones and co-workers wear masks when symptomatic. **Public health sites emphasize frequent hand washing,** and then caution that none of us wash our hands properly. Apparently, the temperature of the water doesn't make all that much difference. The advice is to **wash with water, then soap and scrub for 20 seconds, then rinse.** Or, as the World Health Organization advises, use alcohol hand wipes. In addition, gargling with saltwater at the end of the day, or using a saline nasal rinse can be preventive, as well as useful in treatment.

Several disinfectants have shown to inactivate coronavirus. These are disinfectants with 62-71% ethanol, 0.5% hydrogen peroxide or 0.1% sodium hypochlorite (bleach).

Masks, while useful in preventing spread of the virus to others, are not all that effective in protecting oneself. Facemasks are typically loose fitting, meaning particles can escape. And the face masks generally block only large particles and droplets, making them more effective as protection from environmental pollution than from tiny viral particles. If you do use a mask, N-95 masks, used by health care workers, form a tighter seal, and filter smaller airborne particles. See the government publication for governmental advice on the use of masks.
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/when-and-how-to-use-masks>

There is certainly ample cause to be concerned about a major new virus wreaking havoc around the world, and causing a number of deaths. **To put the fear in some kind of a perspective, though, know that 15 million Americans have been affected by the common flu virus this year, and there have thus far been 8200 American deaths in the 2019-2020 flu epidemic.** The death toll from Covid-19 is, at the time of this writing, around 2500, with numbers of people affected unknown, but less than a million. (This is being written on 2/27/20, and, if pandemic fears are realized, could be exponentially more at the time you read this.)

All of this notwithstanding, in addition to avoiding the virus and protecting yourself from exposure, you can support your immune system to be less susceptible to this and other viruses.

And you do have treatment options should you be infected. See article below.