

MENTAL HEALTH TASK FORCE

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The recent outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic has caused extreme suffering, pain and fear among people across the globe. The World Health Organization (2020) has reported that there is no vaccines or medicines for COVID-19. Thus, prevention is the only measure left that can help us to remain safe from this disease. Based on the recommendations and advisories of the World Health Organization, Government of India and other specialized bodies, the following are recommended to be observed to all the faculty members, non-teaching staff and the students of the University to remain safe and healthy during the pandemic, and even afterwards:

General Health and Well-being

Ministry of AYUSH, Government of India has suggested the following measures to improve one's immunity and health based on the recommendations of known Vaidyas across the country (Ministry of AYUSH, 2020):

I. General Measures

- Drink warm water throughout the day.
- Practice Yogasana, Pranayama and meditation for at least 30 minutes as advised by Ministry of AYUSH
- Spices like Haldi (Turmeric), Jeera (Cumin), Dhaniya (Coriander), Lahsun (Garlic) and Adarak (Ginger) are recommended in cooking.

II. Ayurvedic Immunity Promoting Measures

- Take Chyavanprash 10gm (1tsf) in the morning. Diabetics should take sugar-free Chyavanprash.
- Drink herbal tea/decoction (Kadha) made from Tulsi (Basil), Dalchini (Cinnamon), Kalimirch (Black pepper), Shunthi (Dry Ginger) and Munakka (Raisin)- once or twice a day. Add jaggery (natural sugar) and/or fresh lemon juice to your taste, if needed.
- Golden Milk- Half teaspoon Haldi (turmeric) powder in 150 ml hot milk - once or twice a day

III. Simple Ayurvedic Procedures

- Nasal application - Apply sesame oil/coconut oil or Ghee in both the nostrils (Pratimarsh Nasya) in morning and evening.
- Oil pulling therapy- Take 1 tablespoon sesame or coconut oil in the mouth. Do not drink, Swish in the mouth for 2 to 3 minutes and spit it off followed by warm water rinsed one once or twice a day.

IV. During Dry Cough/Sore Throat

- Steam inhalation with fresh Pudina (Mint) leaves or Ajwain (Caraway seeds) can be practised once a day.
- Lavang (Clove) powder mixed with natural sugar/honey can be taken 2-3 times a day in case of cough or throat irritation. (**Note:** These measures generally treat normal dry cough and sore throat. However, it is best to consult doctors if these symptoms persist.)

NOTE: *The above advisory does not claim to be a treatment for COVID 19 (Ministry of AYUSH, 2020).*

Mental Health: Protection, Maintenance, and Promotion

The myths and realities created during the COVID-19 outbreak have also posed a serious challenge to mental health. The components of psychological distress are quite evident in experiences of anxiety, fear, apprehension, worry, panic experiences, depressive symptoms, feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, loss, and anger, etc. The stress-induced physical health problems, reduced social support, and isolation are some other challenges in maintaining sound mental health (Brooks et al., 2020). In the wake of the present scenario, the following guidelines could be observed by all to evade the psychological distress and achieve good mental health and enhanced well-being (Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, 2020; Public Health England, 2020; UNICEF, 2020; World Health Organization, 2020):

- *Be empathetic to all those who are affected.* People who are affected by COVID-19 have not done anything wrong. They deserve our support, compassion, and kindness.
- *Avoid stigmatizing the affected persons.* Do not refer to them as “COVID-19 cases”, “victims” “COVID-19 families” or “the diseased”. They are “people who have COVID-19”, “people who are being treated for COVID-19”, or “people who are recovering from COVID-19”, and after recovering from COVID-19 their life will go on with their jobs, families and loved ones.

- *Minimize watching, reading or listening to news about COVID-19 that causes you to feel anxious or distressed.* Seek information only from trusted sources (eg. WHO, Govt. of India's websites, etc.) and look for updates at specific times during the day, once or twice. This may be helpful to take practical steps to prepare your plans and protect yourself.
- *Stay vigilant and do not be affected by rumors and misinformation.*
- *Protect yourself and be supportive of others.* Assisting others in their time of need can benefit both the person receiving support and the helper. Working together as one community can help to create solidarity in addressing COVID-19.
- *Find opportunities to amplify positive information and hopeful stories of local people who have experienced and successfully recovered from COVID-19.*
- *Honor caregivers, healthcare professionals and supporting people.*
- *Recognize that your anxiety is completely normal given the present challenging circumstances.*
- *Create distractions from unpleasant situations by engaging yourself in meaningful activities.*
- *Find innovative ways to connect with your friends.*
- *Focus on your health, well-being, and productivity.*
- *Be open to share your experiences and worries.*
- *Exercise regularly for 15 to 30 minutes.*
- *Take a healthy diet.* To prepare your body to build good immunity and fitness.
- *Involve yourself in activities that may enhance meaning during this social distancing.*
- *Engage yourself in good relationships, care, and spiritual practices.*

HELPLINE FOR MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

Anyone facing any mental health issues may contact on the following mobile numbers round-the-clock.

Prof. A. D. Sharma, Deptt. of Philosophy	9406519498	Dr. G. K. Tiwari, Deptt. of Psychology	8819031611
Prof. Devashish Bose, Deptt. of Criminology & Forensic Sciences	9165918689	Dr. Abhishekh Jain, General Physician	9753170067
Prof. Archana Mehta, Deptt. of Botany	9425636646	Dr. Kiran Maheshwari, Gynecologist	9098077287
Dr. Sanjay Kumar, Deptt. of Psychology	8819034818	Dr. B. K. Patel, General Physician	7879163538

Note: Aarogya Setu, a Government of India mobile application may be helpful for contact tracing, self-assessment and contextual advice. Please download and use this App.

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