



FAQs for Patients with Hypertension, Diabetes and Heart Diseases in view of Coronavirus/COVID-19 Pandemic

Are patients with heart disease, diabetes or hypertension at increased risk to get coronavirus infection?

No, people with hypertension, diabetes or heart diseases are at no greater risk of getting the infection than anyone else.

Among people with above diseases is there an increased risk of severe illness or complications once infected?

The majority (80%) of people diagnosed with COVID-19 will have mild symptoms of a respiratory infection (fever, sore throat, cough) and make full recovery. Some of the people with diabetes, hypertension and heart diseases including Heart Failure (weak heart) may develop more severe symptoms and complications. Therefore extra care is advised for these patients.

Are people with diabetes more prone to Covid-19 ?

In general, you know that people with uncontrolled diabetes are at increased risk of all infections. People with diabetes are not at higher risk for acquiring the infection, but some individuals are prone to more severe disease and poorer outcomes once infected. Hence, follow your diet and exercise routine (to the extent possible), take your medications regularly and test your sugar levels frequently so as to keep your diabetes under control.

When diabetic patients become sick, they may require frequent monitoring of blood glucose and adjustment of drugs including insulin, small frequent meals and adequate fluids.

Some tips for those with diabetes, hypertension and heart disease:

Take your medicines regularly - It is very important

Make sure that you take all medications prescribed regularly as before even if you are mildly symptomatic. Don't stop any medication unless advised by your doctor. Continue with your blood pressure, diabetes and heart disease medications in case you are unable to visit your doctor. Medications to control cholesterol (statins) should be continued.

What about reports about BP medications increasing severity of COVID-19 ?

After review of available information the consensus of various scientific societies and expert group of cardiologists is that currently there is no evidence that the two group of drugs- ACE inhibitors (eg. Ramipril, Enalapril and so on) and angiotensin receptor blockers (ARBs) (eg. Losartan, Telmisartan and so on) increase the susceptibility or severity of COVID-19. These drugs are very effective for heart failure by supporting your heart function, and controlling high blood pressure. It maybe be harmful to stop these medications by yourself. This can worsen your heart condition.

What can I take pain or fever?

Some type of pain killers(called NSAIDs) like Ibuprofen is found to worsen the

COVID-19. Such drugs are known to be harmful to heart failure patients and may increase your risk of kidney damage. Avoid NSAIDs or take them only when prescribed by your doctor.

Paracetamol is one of the safest pain killers to use if needed.

Control blood pressure (BP), blood sugar and do regular physical activity

It is also important to control your risk factor levels – Avoid smoking and alcohol, have your BP and blood sugar levels under control and have some form of regular physical activity (However, please modify your out-door activities according to the norms of social-distancing.). Follow the diet and salt restriction as advised. If you are a non-vegetarian, you can continue to be so. Increasing the fibre and protein content of the diet and more vegetables and fruits in diet is advisable.

What should I do if I get symptoms suggestive of COVID-19?

In case you get fever, cough, muscle pain without shortness of breath, call your doctor and seek advice on phone. You need to stay at home (at least for 14 days) and avoid close contact with other family members and maintain hand hygiene and correctly wear a medical mask.

If there is shortness of breath or worsening symptoms like excessive fatigue call/visit your doctor (further advice will depend on advise of your physician)

What should you do to prevent COVID-19?

Covid-19 is spread by coughs and sneezes, through what are called droplets (tiny amount saliva or other secretions expressed through cough/sneezing or even after a hearty laugh) and through touch . When you touch an object that has the virus particles on it, the virus may

get onto your hands and when you touch your face, you may get infected. Virus particles can persist upto 3 days and therefore it is important to maintain hygiene of your surroundings. Wash the rooms , tables and other surfaces with floor cleaners or even simple soap solution and sanitize your hands with hand sanitizers or by washing when you touch unknown or suspicious surfaces.

What are the important steps you can do to prevent acquiring or spreading infection

1. Social distancing – Very important .

- A. Avoid contact with someone who shows symptoms of possible COVID-19 - anyone having a cold or cough or fever.
- B. Avoid non-essential travel and use of public transport.
- C. Avoid public places, crowds and large family get togethers. Keep in touch with friends and relatives using phone, internet, and social media.
- D. Avoid routine visits to hospitals / Labs. for minor problems, contact hospital or HF clinic by phone or helpline number if possible. If you are regularly checking INR and adjusting blood thinning medicines, please contact the doctor over phone if possible and try and avoid a hospital as much as possible.

2. Hand hygiene

- A. Avoid handshakes and touching face with hands
- B. Wash your hands with soap and water frequently – do this for at least 20-30 seconds and systematically to clean all parts of the hand
- C. Alcohol based hand-sanitisers are also useful.
- D. Avoid touching possibly contaminated areas/objects – Public toilet doors, door handles etc.