

The 5 Pillars of Protection: How to Mitigate the Ongoing Pandemic

The Five Pillars of Protection continue to provide the best approach to eliminate the devastating economic and health effects of COVID-19.

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS, UNITED STATES, November 17, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- India needs to continue with its efforts to eliminate COVID-19 infection. The perception is that COVID-19 is primarily an acute infectious disease, and success in limiting cases during much of 2022 will continue. It may very well work otherwise.

The fact remains that much like the rest of the world, Indians have been exposed to the infection in large numbers and getting infected once does not prevent getting infected again. The battles with prolonged sequelae of the disease termed as "[Long COVID](#)" or "Post COVID" are beginning, but have yet to fully unfold. Everyone should expect these to be tough. Getting infected repeatedly (re-infections) only complicates these battles. It is estimated that about 10%-20% of COVID-19 patients go on to develop prolonged symptoms that may be post COVID-19 condition, and anyone can develop the syndrome. Long Covid may well turn out to be a public health concern for the next decade and with its chances of it affecting a productive population as high as that of the dependent population, one can very well imagine the consequences-both economic and societal. And then, as all of us are aware by now as to how Covid-19 plays with the immunity of individuals, the damage may extend well beyond the defined rubric of Long Covid and opportunistic infections may not be an impossibility.

The Five Pillars of Protection – developed by the [World Health Network](#), and extensively used in large measures by Indian states, continue to provide a multilevel and multilayered approach to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Probably it is time to repeat its success, for India, through restressing and reinforcement of the strategies that have worked so well. But a more important reason for reinforcement is the usefulness of the strategy to confront XBB and BQ.1 - a potential cause for re-infections and the increasing chance of long covid. Individual and environmental mitigations, when used in conjunction, will reduce spread of the virus and its negative effect on individuals, the healthcare system, and the economy.

Experts have expressed significant concern about a surge in COVID-19 cases in the fall and winter of 2022. This surge is anticipated for multiple reasons, including the emergence of immune-evasive variants, including XBB and BQ.1, waning immunity and differential response to booster uptake, but also because of the resumption of pre-pandemic social behavior with few

precautions against infection in most locations ¹ . Precaution, even after 3 years of being in the pandemic, continues to be the most effective – both economically and operationally – measure to reduce infection. The WHN's Expert Committee argues that many of these anticipated cases can be more readily prevented – so long as multiple types of protection focussing around the five pillars are used.

1) Masking: Widespread use of high-quality masks (N95 or better) in shared spaces must continue to stay mandatory to ensure a healthy workforce for the future. It needs to be seen as a health investment and not as a wasteful expenditure.

2) Ventilation: Ventilating shared indoor spaces via frequent air changes and HEPA filtration is an investment for the future not just in the context of Covid-19 but also with regard to other respiratory health issues. Good ventilation will also reduce the amount of individual action such as masking that are needed in places where people have to go to work, or people must take to protect themselves and access essential services.

3) Social Distancing: Reducing the density of those in indoor spaces is an important step in limiting the amount of virus present in shared spaces. Offering hybrid and remote options, when possible, is an important step in keeping workplaces and other shared spaces safe.

4) Testing: Testing needs to evolve as not just a strategy to control infection but also to do surveillance and therefore both the rate and number of testing needs to stay high.

5) Updated Vaccination: Updated Vaccination is the most effective public health tool when paired with other mitigation strategies to limit the evolution of the virus and its ability to evade existing vaccines.

But the lessons for people or organizations, the industrial houses, schools, colleges and other institutions will continue to be that if one cannot do one or other of these measures, the other ones can be strengthened to make up the difference. For example, for people who cannot do social distancing, masking in them can be improved to the level of elastomeric masks which are better than N95 masks, and are less expensive because they can be reused many times, or higher levels of ventilation, or more frequent testing. Combining higher levels of any one of the measures can make up for lower levels of another.

Preventing getting infected is not an option in Covid-19, it is the bare minimum we need to be doing.

1 <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-022-03157-x>

2 <https://www.worldhealthnetwork.global/action>

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