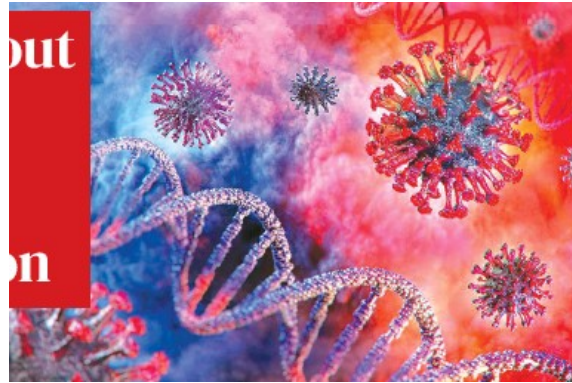


Fast facts about COVID-19 you should share to dispel the misinformation

As the COVID-19 spreads around the world, getting accurate information about the disease becomes ever more important

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Why is there so much alarm about the COVID-19? What do we already know about the disease?



— gina_arboria@gmail.com

The high degree of misinformation that has circulated about COVID-19 in social and mainstream media has created undue fear and anxiety among Filipinos. Cases in point: Every other person you meet had a face mask, until the country ran out of face masks; residents and government officials of Capas, Tarlac protested against the use of the SEA Athletes' Village as a quarantine zone amid rumors that the COVID virus can be transmitted by flies. The unfounded fear and anxiety among Filipinos can be more harmful than the virus itself that is why we should learn and communicate the facts that we currently know about this new disease.

What are the chances that the ordinary Filipino will get COVID-19?

At this time, the health risk from COVID-19 for the ordinary Filipino is very low. Filipinos who have tested positive for the virus are either in quarantine or are outside the Philippines. Of course, things could change and COVID could become prevalent in the Philippines if the measures that have been in place by our government fail, but at the moment there is no reason to be alarmed.

The coronaviruses and COVID-19

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. They affect not only people but also some animals. Human coronaviruses generally give rise to benign colds, but some animal coronaviruses such as the SARS (from bats and civet cats), MERS (from camels), and now COVID-19 (allegedly from snakes), which have evolved to enable them to infect people and acquire the ability to spread between people, cause more serious infections, including fatal pneumonia. The good news about COVID-19 is that, evidently, it is not as lethal as SARS or MERS.

How does COVID-19 spread?

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person—by close contact (within about six feet) or through droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

It is also possible to get the COVID19 if you touch a surface or object that has the virus on it and then you touch your mouth, nose, or eyes.

People who are infected with COVID-19 are probably most contagious when they are actively sick.

That is why patients need to be isolated either in the hospital or at home until they are better and no

longer pose a risk of infecting others. It might be possible for it to spread before people show symptoms, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

Why quarantine people who are suspected to have been exposed to COVID-19

Quarantine means separating a person or group of people who have been exposed to a contagious disease but have not developed illness (symptoms) from others who have not been exposed, in order to prevent the possible spread of that disease. The quarantine period depends on the incubation period of the communicable disease, which refers to the span of time from exposure to appearance of signs and symptoms. For COVID-19, the period of quarantine is 14 days.

Ways to prevent getting infected with COVID-19 and do fac masks work?

The following preventive measures are recommended by the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact, such as kissing, sharing cups, or sharing eating utensils with sick people.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as toys and doorknobs.

In so far as face masks are concerned, the only people who should use them are those who are sick and healthcare workers who get in contact with sick people. A mask that is worn all day long gets damp and may breed pathogenic organisms. Also, people who wear them touch the mask, and therefore, their face a lot, which increases their risk of transmitting viruses from surfaces of objects to their eyes, nose, and mouth.

The unfounded fear and anxiety among Filipinos can be more harmful than the virus itself. That is why we should learn and communicate the facts we currently know about this new disease.