

- Viruses / Medical awareness

Who are at risk of developing complications?

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We are in a new battleground, and limited information about COVID-19 puts us further into disadvantage. As we take it day by day, experts have observed that certain groups are more vulnerable than others.

SMOKERS

The COVID-19 attacks healthy cells, especially the ones in the respiratory tree (nose, throat, lungs), making smokers who are likely to have lung disease or reduced lung capacity more at risk of developing severe complications.

The World Health Organization (WHO) explained, “The act of smoking means that fingers (and possibly contaminated cigarettes) are in contact with lips, which increases the possibility of transmission of the virus from hand to mouth.” “Smoking products such as water pipes often involve the sharing of mouthpieces and hoses, which could facilitate the transmission of COVID-19 in communal and social settings,” WHO added.

PEOPLE WITH PREEXISTING CONDITIONS

Current data points that people with underlying medical conditions — chronic lung disease, moderate to severe asthma, chronic kidney disease, serious heart conditions, diabetes, immune deficiencies, and severe obesity — record higher COVID-19 deaths. This group’s immune defenses are weak, do not function normally, and thus have reduced the ability to fight and recover when the virus infects their healthy cells.

OLDER PEOPLE

Current clinical data show that older adults are at higher risk of severe illness and even death associated with COVID-19. Italy has recorded a high fatality rate due to its aging population. People’s immune systems weaken in time, making the elderly more vulnerable to all types of infections and at risk of developing severe disease due to COVID-19, especially if they have pre-existing conditions.

PREGNANT WOMEN

Women’s immune system is complex during pregnancy. They are advised to take extra precautionary measures to avoid any sickness as this might harm or affect the growth and development of unborn babies. As of now, it is unclear if pregnant women with COVID-19 can transmit the virus to their babies. However, the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists in the UK is looking into the probability of mother-to-baby transmission of COVID-19 during pregnancy or birth after reporting a single case where this scenario appears likely. In China, some mothers with COVID-19 symptoms reportedly deliver their babies prematurely to save both from possible complications or death. The challenge posed by the newly-discovered virus is challenging for us all, but until we bend the curve, the fact that it is more difficult for others remains. Without proper care, these groups will continue to be at higher risk for developing severe illness due to COVID-19.