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Gastrointestinal issues common among COVID-19 patients

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With fresh COVID cases on the rise and new emerging mutants, people are forced to stay indoors, largely impacting their lifestyle. Furthermore, fever, cough, and breathlessness were the primary indicators of the disease when the first wave arrived. But with the second wave, gastrointestinal symptoms have also become equally common and, the number of cases has only surged.

According to a study published in the Lancet, over 60 per cent of COVID-19 patients have gastrointestinal complications, which showcase the severity of the disease, and as many as 44 per cent of COVID-19 patients continue to showcase GI sequelae despite being discharged from the hospital.

While most people remain ignorant to gastrointestinal symptoms brushing it off as any regular problem, doctors are highlighting that one should also pay attention to any lingering gastrointestinal symptoms, even if it is a recovered COVID patient. It is advisable to get it checked at once. These symptoms include diarrhoea, acid reflux, cramps, bloating, abdominal pain, and nausea to name a few. Initially, these indications were not evident, but gastrointestinal implications have been linked to the mutating nature of the virus.

Scientists also believe that one of the principal reasons, the gastrointestinal system is so acutely affected is due to the high presence of the angiotensin-converting enzyme-(ACE2) receptors near the gut, making it easier for the spike protein of the coronavirus to enter the biological system of a human being. With the gut being an easy target for infection, signs of lasting gut infection can be an indicator of a long COVID manifestation and can still affect a patient, weeks after recovering from the aftermath of the virus.

Though there is continual research of the many vital complications related to persistent viruses, several doctors have reached a consensus that these lingering symptoms can affect patients for as long as 3 months after recovery.

Digestive complaints remain a challenge since it directly impacts a person's nutritional needs, which is crucial for their betterment. Hence, along with symptomatic treatment, priority must also be given to managing these gastrointestinal complaints as well.

As with most long COVID symptoms, taking ample rest, drinking fluids are helpful in taking care of health issues. Besides taking ample rest, and drinking fluids, supplementation of Vitamin C, D, B12, and calcium-fortified foods aid in taking care of digestive issues. Experts emphasize including whole grains, fibre-rich foods, probiotics that help soothe the stomach and promote good gut health. At the same time, a post-COVID-recovery diet should include a lot of vegetables, fruits, nuts, and seeds, limiting heavy fried processed foods which can further upset your stomach.