PANDEMIC OUTBREAK

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A pandemic is an outbreak of infectious disease that occurs over a wide geographical area and that is of high prevalence. A pandemic generally affects a significant proportion of the world's population, usually over the course of several months. Throughout history, there have been many deadly pandemics, but the Black Death and the influenza pandemic of 1918-19 rank among the most lethals. The Black Death, which ravaged Europe between 1347 and 1351 and likely was caused by plague, killed roughly 25, million people. The influenza pandemic of 1918-19, or "Spanish flu," claimed an estimated 20-40 million lives. A COVID-19 outbreak that was declared a pandemic in 2020 also killed millions of people. Pandemics can be caused by several factors. For example, in some cases, a new strain or subtype of virus that first emerged in animals jumps to humans and then becomes readily transmissible between humans. In other instances, an existing disease-causing agent mutates, increasing its infectiousness. Pandemics typically slow and come to an end on their own, though the process may be accelerated through effective preventive strategies, such as improved personal hygiene or the development of a vaccine. Some pandemics, however, occur in waves, such that decreased disease activity may be followed by another period of high disease prevalence, thereby prolonging the outbreak.

In March 2020 an ongoing outbreak of a novel coronavirus known as severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV2) was declared a pandemic by WHO officials. Infection with SARS-CoV2 produced an illness known as coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19); the illness was characterized primarily by fever, cough, and shortness of breath. The outbreak began in late 2019 in Wuhan, China when a patient with pneumonia of unknown cause was admitted to a local hospital. In the following weeks, the number of people infected with the novel virus grew rapidly in Wuhan, and the disease spread to other regions of China. By early 2020, COVID-19 had reached Europe and the United States, carried there by travelers coming from affected regions. By the time the outbreak was declared a pandemic, cases of COVID-19 had been detected in numerous countries worldwide. So, now it's an urgent matter to protect peoples, to make environment safer and to ensure good hygiene. According to World Health Organization guidelines mentioned can be followed.

Protect yourself and those around you: Get vaccinated as soon as it's your turn and follow local guidance on vaccination. Keep physical distance of at least 1 metre from others, even if they don't appear to be sick. Avoid crowds and close contact. Wear a properly fitted mask when physical distancing is not possible and in poorly ventilated settings. Clean your hands frequently with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water. Cover your mouth and nose with a bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Dispose off used tissues immediately and clean hands regularly. If you develop symptoms or test positive for COVID-19, self-isolate until you recover.

To make your environment as safe as possible avoid the 3Cs; spaces that are closed, crowded or involve close contact. Meet people outside. Outdoor gatherings are safer than indoor ones, particularly if indoor spaces are small and without outdoor air coming in. If you can't avoid crowded or indoor settings, take these precautions: Open a window to increase the amount of natural ventilation when indoors. Wear a mask.

To ensure good hygiene you should regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with either an alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water. This eliminates germs that may be on your hands, including viruses. Cover your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Dispose off the used tissue immediately into a closed bin and wash your hands. Clean and disinfect surfaces frequently, especially those which are regularly touched, such as door handles, faucets and phone screens.

If you feel unwell, here's what to do. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty in breathing, seek medical attention immediately. Call by telephone first and follow the directions of your local health authority. Know the full range of symptoms of COVID-19. The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, dry cough, tiredness and loss of taste or smell. Less common symptoms include aches and pains, headache, sore throat, red or irritated eyes, diarrhoea, a skin rash or discolouration of fingers or toes. Stay home and self-isolate for 10 days from symptom onset, plus three days after symptoms cease. Call your health care provider or hotline for advice. Have someone bring you supplies. If you need to leave your house or have someone near you, wear a properly fitted mask to avoid infecting others. Keep up to date on the latest information from trusted sources, such as WHO or your local and national health authorities. Local and national authorities and public health units are best placed to advise on what people in your area should be doing to protect themselves.

References

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