

The coronavirus pandemic currently shocking the world gained entry into Nigeria with its first case confirmed on the 27th of February, 2020 in Lagos state. The discovery spiralled into a frenzy of misinformation as the NCDC and Federal Ministry of Health worked to allay citizens' fears and contain the outbreak. It is important that we all play a role in beating the virus by sharing only validated information and promoting effective preventive measures.

The Coronavirus CivActs Campaign (CCC) gathers rumours, concerns and questions from communities across Nigeria to eliminate information gaps between the government, media, NGOs and citizens. By providing the public with facts, the CCC ensures a better understanding of needs regarding the coronavirus and debunks rumours before they can do more harm. Information sharing will be critical to defeating the virus, due to the diverse cultural backgrounds and drawbacks in national education. About 47% of the Nigerian population have access to internet services in according to a 2018 estimate by Statista.

Maintaining Mental Health During COVID-19

Ever since the first case of the Novel coronavirus COVID-19 was announced in Nigeria on the 27th of February, there has been a notable degree of fear, worry and foreboding among citizens. As the disease spread further, the government stepped in, introducing lockdown measures in the 3 most affected areas Lagos, Ogun and FCT on the 29th of March to curtail the spread; and easing the lockdown on the 4th of May for economic reasons.

The media focus on the COVID-19 pandemic combined with the societal changes it caused tend to cause fear and anxiety which can be overwhelming if not handled properly. The pandemic has brought about an increase in unemployment and a reduced connection with community, both of which are recipes for high stress levels. One must be mindful not to adopt harmful coping strategies such as substance abuse which can be seen as an alternative in such situations. Coping with stress successfully will make you, the people you care about, and your community stronger in the fight against the virus.

Anxiety, depression, poor nutrition and substance abuse are some predisposing factors to mental and neurological disorders. Around 20% of the world's children and adolescents have mental disorders or problems, and roughly half of all mental disorders begin before the age of 14. The vast majority of people with a mental disorder in Nigeria do not receive treatment and some still roam the streets.

In the wake of all the distressing news, it is important that we explore innovative ways to focus on wellness and nourish our minds and bodies, such as by adopting the following measures:

Some ways to focus on wellness during COVID19



Connect with loved ones



Avoid Information overload



Create a healthy routine



Support others

This is a good time to reach out to loved ones and friends, close by and far away through multiple platforms, such as WhatsApp and Skype. Audio calls can also help maintain these connections.

Finding like minds to connect with online could also be helpful. Positive online communities, where you can make new friends, get inspired and chat about things you care about, can help you stay mentally healthy. You can try searching for groups involved in causes and interests you are passionate about.

Minimize watching, reading or listening to news about COVID-19 that causes you to feel anxious or distressed. The sudden and near-constant stream of news reports about an outbreak can cause anyone to feel worried.

Seek information only from trusted sources such as the NCDC and the WHO and mainly so that you can take practical steps to prepare your plans and protect yourself and loved ones. Seek information updates at specific times during the day, once or twice. Get the facts; not rumours and misinformation. Facts can help to minimize fears.

Having a routine even while staying at home helps your mind and body adjust and build resilience. Set a schedule for waking up, meals and bedtime. Resilience thrives with proper nutrition and rest. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle during this time is important to keep your immune system strong. Do not self-medicate. For youths and children, expressing yourself through illustrations or comics is a great way of staying socially connected while keeping physical distance.

Protect yourself and be supportive to others. Assisting others in their time of need can benefit both the person receiving support and the helper. Working together as one community can help to create solidarity in addressing COVID-19 together. Find opportunities to amplify positive and hopeful stories and positive images of local people who have experienced COVID-19. For example, stories of people who have recovered or who have supported a loved one and are willing to share their experience.

RUMOURS



VS



FACTS

A vaccine for coronavirus has been developed in Kano state

A lot of products have been peddled as cures for COVID-19 since the pandemic was announced but many of them have been untested and may contain harmful substances.

Wearing a facemask can make you sick

Wearing a facemask in public is a precautionary measure against spread of the coronavirus as it can be spread even by asymptomatic people. Though a facemask cannot confer disease to you, prolonged use of the face mask is not advised by the WHO

I can catch COVID-19 from receiving a package that arrives from countries with confirmed cases

Currently, there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 through imported goods or packages from countries with confirmed cases. Till date, there is no known case of COVID-19 in Nigeria associated with imported goods.

WHO is not considering African vaccines and supporting foreign ones

By definition, a vaccine for COVID-19 would be prepared with a weak dose of the virus itself or a substitute. Many drugs being suggested as prevention for the virus are not vaccines. WHO is not against alternative medicines but wants them to be tested first for efficacy and adverse side effects.

Taking alcoholic drinks can help flush the virus from the system

There is no evidence to support that alcoholic drinks can help prevent or cure coronavirus. Chronic alcohol use can lead to adverse health problems such as alcoholic liver cirrhosis and kidney problems.

Potential Treatments of COVID-19

A lot is said in the media about prevention of COVID-19, but not much about a cure. This is because not much is known about the virus since it was first discovered in December. However, there are efforts being made around the world to find sufficient treatment as well as claims of treatment already being found.

On the 1st of May, 2020, the FDA approved the anti-viral drug Remdesivir for emergency use for hospitalized COVID-19 patients, citing its ability to inhibit viral synthesis. This was following a randomised testing trial conducted by NIAID that evaluated different durations of the drug. The drug has also been approved for treatment for the critically ill in Japan. The drug is produced by biopharmaceutical company, Gilead Sciences.

Some herbal remedies have also been touted as cures or adequate prevention for COVID-19 but there is yet to be clinical basis for such claims. A popular example is the herbal tonic developed in Madagascar branded Covid-Organics. Developed by the Malagasy Institute of Applied Research, it has been claimed to cure two patients by Malagasy President Andry Rajoelina. The drug has sparked interest in Artemisinin based therapies for the coronavirus. There has been great interest in the drug especially from other African countries such as Chad and Tanzania, which have placed large orders for the tonic. Senegal recently started clinical trials for the drug.

As it stands, a healthy immune system is still critical to fighting the virus and it is important to eat healthy, avoid vices that are dangerous to health and keep the most vulnerable safe from contracting the coronavirus.

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE IN NIGERIA AT AS TODAY - 20/05/2020

6401 CONFIRMED CASES	192 DEATHS	1,734 RECOVERED	36,899 TESTED
--------------------------------	----------------------	---------------------------	-------------------------

Coronavirus CivActs Campaign is brought to you by
Accountability Lab Nigeria.

