



Deutschrachige
Medizinische
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Fördergemeinschaft
der Querschnittgelähmter
in Deutschland e.V.

24.11.2020

INFORMATION REGARDING SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19 FOR PEOPLE WITH SPINAL CORD INJURY

The SARS-CoV-2 virus (or more general term Coronav-virus) pandemic affects people worldwide. We would like to give you a brief overview on the spread, prevention and risks with emphasis on people with spinal cord injury.

Corona-Virus

As far as we know, the novel Corona-virus is transmitted from person to person via droplet infection. Thus, transmission is possible in particular by sneezing and coughing, but also by smear infection (contact with infected person or indirectly by touching a contaminated object).

The Corona-virus can survive on surfaces for up to 9 days, although it is probably infectious for 4-5 days.

Symptoms

The disease course can vary from asymptomatic (80%) to severe (20%, of which 5% require intensive care) with severe pneumonia, acute respiratory distress syndrome, septic shock and multiple organ failure. The infection can last from 2 weeks to 6 weeks, depending on the disease severity.

The incubation period is 5-6 days on average but can also extend to 14 days. Accordingly, the duration of quarantine has been set at 14 days.

Common symptoms (according to WHO):

- Fever
- Dry cough
- Tiredness
- Shortness of breath
- Aches and pains, headache
- Sore throat
- Nausea, diarrhoea
- Loss of smell and taste

Risk

At this point it is not exactly known which subgroup of spinal cord injured individuals is at particular risk to suffer from a severe disease course once they contracted the virus.

Based on the few known cases both symptom free infections with SARS-CoV-2 in tetraplegics – against previous projections - as well as more severe disease courses in paraplegics requiring ICU treatment have been observed. More severe disease courses mainly correlate with increasing age and known comorbidities and not with the level and severity of spinal cord injury.

Therapy

Thus far, no confirmed causal antiviral drug therapy or vaccination is available. Only symptom-oriented treatments are available, which illustrates the importance of preventative measures.

Disease prevention

- Social distancing, i.e. stay at home if possible and reduce personal contact as much as possible. Keep yourself informed about state/region wide distancing measures.
- Maintain at least 1.5 meter distance between you and others
- Wear mouth and nose protector
- Avoid shaking hands or hugging.
- Avoid touching your face.
- If possible, cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing
- Wash hands regularly and for a sufficiently long time (at least 20 seconds) with soap and water – in particular after sneezing, coughing or blowing your nose.
- Refrain from smoking and other activities that weaken the lungs.
- If you are being cared for by a third party, make sure that these persons also adhere to the hygiene measures

Work

- Work, if possible, from home. Keep mandatory meetings as short as possible, consider video/telephone conferences.
- If you have flu-like symptoms or other respiratory symptoms, stay at home.
- If you are an active peer, consider using video/telephone conferences instead

Medical supplies and drugs

- Plan well ahead your demand for medical supply such as catheters or medication.
- In case you run out of disinfectant for catheterization, check for alternatives ([Leitlinie Intermittierender Katheterismus, page 11](#)) or ask at your drug store.

What to do if you experience symptoms?

If you feel sick (fever, cough, flu-like or respiratory symptoms, acute loss of smell/taste), contact your family practitioner (Hausarzt), company physician (Betriebsarzt) or the local/regional public health department (Gesundheitsamt). They will provide information how to proceed in respect to further medical consultation, Corona-virus testing and preventative measures.

What to do if your caregiver is no longer available?

Plan ahead how to substitute your caregiver, who may get sick as well or is forced to undergo quarantine measures. In case you cannot replace your caregiver, you should contact your family practitioner (Hausarzt), the Spinal Cord Injury Center (Querschnittgelähmtenzentrum) you are connected to or your local/regional public health department (Gesundheitsamt).

Further information

Please be advised to use only reliable information sources:

- Information from the Robert Koch Institute-
 - [COVID-19](#)
 - [Antworten auf häufig gestellte Fragen](#)
 - [Risikogruppen](#)
- [Informationen des Bundesgesundheitsministerium](#)
- [Bundesinstitut für Risikobewertung \(BfR\): Einschätzung Übertragbarkeit über Gegenstände und Lebensmittel](#)
- [Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung \(BZgA\)](#)
- Austria: [Coronavirus](#)
- Switzerland: [Neues Coronavirus \(Informationen des Bundesamts für Gesundheit \(Schweiz\)\)](#)
- Information from the Federal Ministry of Health

Literature

RKI : https://www.rki.de/SharedDocs/FAQ/NCOV2019/FAQ_Liste.html Abruf 24.3.2020

WHO : [Report of the WHO-China Joint Mission on Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#). (PDF; 1,6 MB) 16–24 February 2020. [Weltgesundheitsorganisation](#) (WHO), 28. Februar 2020, abgerufen am 24.3.2020.