HEALTHY TIPS

Why Is the COVID-19 Virus more Dangerous for Elderly People?

By bestfolkmedicine · 13/03/2020 · 3 min read



Even though the COVID-19 disease and its responses impact everyone, older people are at a higher risk.

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Before the virus affected more than 100 countries globally, early Chinese data showed that the older people were the most vulnerable to the disease's worst effects.

Now, this data, along with research from Italy which is the second most affected country from the virus, is showing how dangerous this virus is for the older people, especially ones with immunological, heart, and lung conditions.

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Italy, Country with One of the Oldest Populations in the World

According to an analysis, in Italy which has one of the oldest populations in the world, of the 105 patients who died from COVID-19, the average age was 81.

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This places a 20-year gap between the average age of people who were positive to the virus and the deceased.

According to Chinese data from their CDC, the illness appears to be more fatal with each passing decade.

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In a February report, the researchers investigated the first 72,314 patients with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 and found a major variation in the fatality rate according to age.

But, age doesn't tell the entire story about risk groups of serious illness. It also unveils the underlying vulnerabilities in the wider population to a disease such as COVID-19.

Younger people with some health problems are also a risky group.

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The lessons from this data could be helpful for the treatment and prevention of the spread and t helps us understand how important it is to avoid exposing older adults by protecting the whole society.

Immunity Diminishes with Age & Makes Us more Prone to Serious Disease

With aging, the bodily systems that help us fight off illnesses diminish.

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Not only does our body begin to struggle fighting off new infections such as this one, but it's also more likely to be impacted by chronic diseases which further weaken our immune defence.

In older adults, the white blood cells which help find and remove infections reduce and their ability to identify new pathogens and fight them off lowers.

In COVID-19 cases, the virus can also afflict the immune cells which may otherwise be the fight off the virus.

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With fewer of these cells to begin and also weaker ones, the illness can cause more damage.

According to Sean Leng, a professor and geriatrician of medicine at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, immunity isn't as strong as it is in younger people.

> *New statistics about Covid-19 deaths in Italy show that this disease is particularly dangerous to the elderly. pic.twitter.com/jQDv8R7TgG*
>
> *— Paul Graham (@paulg) March 6, 2020*

Moreover, recent studies have concluded that in most people, their immunity is okay in their 60s or even in the 70s.

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But, the immunity goes down quite fast after the age of 75 and 80.

Cytokine Storm or a Dangerous Overreaction to Foreign Bodies

When the immunity begins to fight off an infection in an older person, there's a higher risk of cytokine storm or a dangerous overreaction.

Cytokines are proteins that signal the body to boost its infection-fighting properties.

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But, in a storm, they can get overproduced and lead to strong inflammation, fever, and failure of organs.

So, the slow response to infections isn't the only thing that can harm the older people, but their immunity's overreaction to foreign invaders as well.

But, the good news is that there are treatments for the cytokine storm syndromes that may help save lives in this outbreak.

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