5 STEPS for Managing patients with COVID-19 at home:

Tips for health care providers

THIS INFORMATION IS TO AID HEALTHCARE PROVIDER THAT CARE FOR COVID-19 PATIENTS

1. Determine if the patient has COVID-19 infection

If you suspect someone has COVID-19, arrange testing according to local protocols.

If they have severe breathlessness, confusion, chest pain, or are unable to take care of themselves, admit them to a hospital immediately.

If a COVID-19 test is negative and symptoms persist, the test may need to be repeated, or there could be another cause.

Check the Oxygen saturations for all suspected COVID-19 patients and admit those with oxygen saturations below 94%, and those with comorbidities into a treatment facility.

2. Advise the patients to do the following

a. Isolate a confirmed patient from other people, and rest, in a separate, well-ventilated room if feasible, or more than 1 metre away from others.

b. If feasible, the patient should also use a separate bathroom.

c. Drink plenty of fluids to stay hydrated.

d. Have a nutritious diet.

e. Wear a mask.

f. Use separate utensils for food and drink, avoid speaking during the meal.

g. Open their windows to improve ventilation.

Manage fever: Provide paracetamol for fever, headache, or body ache (check dose for weight and dose, for adults >50kg, 1000mg at least 6 hours between doses, maximum 4g/4000mg per day including any combination medications).

If fever continues despite this, tell the patient may place a cold wet cloth on the forehead.
Check the oxygen saturation level of all patients using a pulse oximeter. For patients on home-based care, explain how to use the pulse oximeter and what to do with the results. A few guidance is:

a. If oxygen saturation is 94% or above:
   i. Check oxygen saturations with pulse oximeter 3 times a day for those with symptoms who have risk factors for severe disease¹
   ii. Continue with symptomatic management of the patient

b. If oxygen saturation is 90% or more, but less than 94%:
   i. Seek hospital care
   ii. Consider if prone positioning, or other repositioning may improve oxygenation, if the patient is able, but weigh against potential risks
   iii. Reassess the patient, if oxygen level is not improving, arrange for hospital admission for effective management

c. If oxygen saturation is less than 90%:
   i. Arrange for admission into a health facility with capacity to manage the patient immediately
   ii. Transfer the patient with oxygen, usually starting at 5 litres per minute with titration to response
   iii. Advise prone positioning, or other repositioning, if safe to do so

Provide needed instructions to the patient’s family on the following:

a. Only one person in the household should be the caregiver for the patient

b. The other members of the household should stay in a in a separate room from the patient, if possible, or keep a distance of at least 1 metre.

c. Everyone should wear a mask properly

d. While providing food for the patients, the caregiver must wear a mask properly, and maintain distance of 1 metre

e. Everyone in the household should wash their hands regularly with soap and water or use a hand sanitizer

f. Windows should be opened for ventilation

g. Food should be served to the patient in disposable plates or utensils kept separate or wash the plates and utensils with soap and water if not disposable

h. Surfaces should be frequently sanitized

i. Monitor the household for symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 (see step 1)

¹ Risk factors for severe disease according to WHO guidance
   • Age more than 60 years
   • Underlying noncommunicable diseases (NCDs); diabetes, hypertension, cardiac disease, chronic lung diseases, dementia, mental disorders, chronic kidney disease, obesity among others
   • Smoking

Continue with steps 2 and 3 for stable patients with oxygen saturation of 94% or above

For patients with oxygen saturation of 94% and above, with improving symptoms – continue with steps 2 & 3.

For patients with worsening symptoms such as breathlessness, confusion, chest pain, or extreme weakness, admit them to hospital immediately.