

Covid-19 and Mobile Phones

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Abstracts: Mobile phone has become our constant companion wherever we go. As personal hygiene is crucial in preventing COVID-19, special care is needed regarding the use of the mobile phones. A number of organisms would be present on the device. While many of these are harmless, but, there are also disease-causing organisms like the SARS-CoV-2 virus that can survive on surfaces long enough to be transmitted to you or another person. By routinely cleaning and disinfecting our mobile phone, we can lessen the chances of passing these viruses & germs on to our friends, family, relatives or even our coworkers

Keywords: Mobile phone, COVID-19, SARS-CoV-2.

BACKGROUND

Covid-19 has created a health emergency and has become a major health risk for billions of people across the globe. Current research into the corona virus established that this virus is transmitted mainly through direct contact with respiratory droplets of an infected person (through coughing and sneezing), and touching surfaces contaminated with the virus (World health organization. 2020a; & World health organization. 2020b).

As Corona virus continues to spread around the world, and we've likely heard the frequent reminders about maintaining personal hygiene by washing their hands regularly by soap and water or clean with alcohol based sanitizers, not touching their face and mouth too often, cough etiquette, wearing face masks and various other good hygiene habits (World health organization. 2020c; & Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2020).

One item that is missing or may be neglecting from these warnings: Our mobile or cell phone!!! Mobile phone has become our constant companion

wherever we go. This is the one thing that most people carry everywhere, including kitchen, bathroom, toilet, bedroom, workplace etc. and touches their faces multiple times a day (Chiu, J. 2020).

While we have been focusing on sanitizing and washing our hands multiple times in a day, most of us have forgotten or missed about the mobile phones, which in many ways is an actual "petri dish" for hundreds of viruses -- including SARS-CoV-2 virus. It comes in frequent contact with our palms and faces for not only making and receiving calls but also responding to messages or reply on whatsapp, facebook and emails. As personal hygiene is crucial in preventing COVID-19, special care is needed regarding the use of the mobile phones (India today. 2020; Sunil, P.K., & Kumar, S. 2020; & Lenhart, A. *et al.*, 2020).

Naturally, the mobile phone that has become a part and parcel of our lives, should be taken care of in the times of COVID-19. A number of organisms would be present on the device. While many of these are harmless, but, there are also disease-causing organisms like the SARS-CoV-2 virus that can survive on surfaces long enough to be transmitted to you or another person.

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In addition, our saliva might scatter while speaking on the mobile phone and get deposited on it. In short, a mobile phone can be rightly termed as a breeding ground for germs (Sunil, P.K., & Kumar, S. 2020; Health line. 2020; & Mahipal, A. 2020).

The scientists have warned many times that corona viruses and other germs can survive on hard surfaces such as mobile phone screens for up to several days. In fact, cell phones have been reported to have more germs or bacteria than a toilet seat. That why these mobile phones offers a potential route of infection and arguably the easiest means of transmitting the virus (Chiu, J. 2020; *Indiatoday*. 2020; & Foley, K.E. 2020).

This means that no matter how much hand washing and sanitizing we can do, if we turn around and pick up an unclean phone right away, we are potentially exposing ourselves to these all virus and germs we just want to got rid of (Axelson, B. 2020).

Cleaning our Mobile phone regularly is one of the smartest things we can do to prevent the spread of viruses & germs. In fact, in the current scenario, mobile phone hygiene is a more important preventative measure than wearing face masks. It is important to keep your phone clean and disinfected regularly to reduce your chances of catching the corona virus infection to a minimum . The sound way of cleaning your phone is to use disinfectant wipes with 70% isopropyl alcohol. By routinely cleaning our mobile phone, we can lessen the chances of passing these viruses & germs on to our friends, family, relatives or even our coworkers (Health line. 2020; *Times of India*. 2020; & Chowdhury, H. 2020).

We shouldn't just clean the front screen only. We have to thoroughly wipe the back, inside and edges of the phone as well. For a deep clean, we have to remove the mobile phone from any cover or case, turn the phone off and unplug everything from it. Thoroughly cleaning the screen, sides and back with these kinds of wipes, and washing our hands properly, should all help keep germs to a minimum (Webb, J. 2020).

Incidentally, the phones of doctors who deal with patients have the highest concentration of bacteria and viruses. There are some basic behaviors we can start adopting to help keep our mobile phone as well as ourselves a germ free to some extent.

- Frequent use of hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol content) before picking up the mobile phone. This would prevent the virus from spreading from the hands to the mobile phone to a certain extent

- Use an earphone or Bluetooth device for speaking. By this means saliva will not get deposited on the phone
- Don't use mobile phone while eating.
- Don't use mobile phone in the toilet and washrooms.
- As far as possible, do not use another person's mobile phone.
- Instead of watching photos and videos in somebody's phone, share them through Whats App or similar app.
- Don't share mobile phone with others.
- Avoid placing the mobile at every surface like table, slabs etc.
- Always carry it in pocket or bag.
- For Doctors specially, don't use the mobile phone while seeing or treating any patient.
- And Finally, Alcohol wipes should be used atleast twice daily to disinfect the device. but ensure that the ports and entry points of microphones remain dry....

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