



Bangkok Post Learning: *Test Yourself*

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Understanding Covid-19 by Gary Boyle



Photo by Pornprom Satrabhaya

Read the following story by Arusa Pisuthipan from the *Bangkok Post*. Then, answer the questions that follow.

Who should get tested for Covid-19? Are surgical masks really necessary? These and other questions answered by an infectious-medicine specialist

The virus has so far infected over 90,000 people and taken more than 3,100 lives across the globe. Thailand saw its possibly first coronavirus-related death on Sunday, making for a total of 47 people infected in the country.

The *Bangkok Post* spoke to infectious-medicine specialist Dr Thanason Thummakul from CGH Hospital.

How to test for Covid-19?

So far, the only way to check if patients are infected with the novel coronavirus is through a laboratory technique called polymerase chain reaction (PCR). Right now, the PCR test can only be carried out in large state hospitals such as Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital, Rajavithi Hospital, Ramathibodi Hospital and Siriraj Hospital, as well as some private healthcare providers. Prices vary.

Who should get tested?

People with no Covid-19 symptoms (fever, dry cough, shortness of breath) should see no need to get tested for the new coronavirus, especially if they do not travel to high-risk countries such as China, Japan, South Korea, Macau, Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, Iran, France, Germany and Italy.

"No symptoms could mean no virus, or that the viral load is still too low to be detected," explained Dr Thanason. "If people get tested without any symptoms and the test shows negative results, it could mean the viral load is too

small. And with such results, they might be confident that they are safe from the virus, which might not necessarily be the case."

What about people who return from high-risk countries?

Social responsibility is essential in such cases, said Dr Thanason. Although the coronavirus scare looms over Thailand, it is extremely important that those who return from high-risk areas declare themselves to authorities. "These people should be encouraged to be brave and tell the truth, if only for the benefit of themselves in terms of diagnosis and treatments. These people should not be blamed but should instead be complimented for their courage."

Should we travel overseas?

Trips to high-risk countries should not be scheduled and should be cancelled if already planned. Trips to other countries should be cancelled or postponed unless extremely necessary.

"If people are to travel, they must do so with care, especially when they are in public places like airports and aircraft." Thai people can still travel domestically, though, said the doctor. "But avoid crowded places and take preventive measures."

Is wearing a surgical mask the best way to prevent the virus?

The coronavirus is transmitted via fluids in the respiratory system such as mucus and saliva. When coronavirus-infected patients cough or sneeze without covering the mouth, they disperse droplets of mucus and saliva into the air.

These droplets stay in the air and fall onto any surface 1-2m away. But droplets can stay on surfaces like doorknobs or handrails and survive for 5-6 days, so most patients are infected by making contact with a surface or object that has the virus before touching their own nose, eyes or mouth. Therefore, regular hand-washing is essential.

When to use a mask

For healthy people, wear a mask only if you are taking care of a person with suspected coronavirus infection. Wear a mask if you are coughing or sneezing. Masks are effective only when used in combination with frequent hand-cleaning with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water. If you wear a mask, then you must know how to use it and dispose of it properly.

Section 1: Read through the story and answer the following questions.

1. How many people are infected with Covid-19 in Thailand?
2. PCR tests cost the same at different hospitals. True or false?
3. People with a dry cough should get tested for the virus. True or false?
4. A negative test result means you are definitely safe from infection. True or false?
5. If you've recently been to France, should you tell the authorities?
6. You should postpone travel within Thailand. True or false?
7. Viral droplets can survive for almost a week. True or false?
8. It is important to get rid of used masks properly. True or false?

Section 2: Write the noun form of the following words in the space provided.

9. necessary 10. private 11. negative 12. brave 13. cancelled

Section 3: Read the following passage. Then, fill in the blanks with the correct words from the choices given.

"China's death ...14.... from Covid-19 is high because a very large number of patients fell sick at ...15... the same time. This was too much for the country's public health system to ...16... . Doctors and nurses are also ...17..., attending a high number of patients. This means if infection takes place at a slower pace, we will be able to ...18... with the disease, which will in turn keep the death toll under control. And this will be possible if people follow preventive measures ...19... ."

14. A. toll B. amount C. numbers
15. A. much of B. partly C. pretty much
16. A. to handle B. for handle C. to handling
17. A. exhaustive B. tiring C. exhausted
18. A. handle B. cope C. control
19. A. strict B. stricter C. strictly

Section 4: Find words that match the following definitions.

20. a person who is an expert in a particular area of work or study.....
21. when a person has a higher temperature than normal
22. a duty to take care of something
23. discovering the cause of an illness
24. liquid that is produced in your mouth

For the answers, find the story online at www.bangkokpost.com/learning. If you have any questions or feedback, please contact the Editor at garyb@bangkokpost.co.th