

RADIO EPISODE 9:

STOP THE SPREAD OF MYTHS AND MISINFORMATION

There are lots of myths and misinformation (false news) about COVID-19, in our country and around the world, and they can do a lot of harm. How do we recognise these and stop their spread?

RADIO:

Start with playing the 'COVID-19 – Together we can beat it' song.

Welcome to the ninth of our 'COVID-19 – Together we can beat it' radio programmes. Keep listening to get the information that you need about COVID-19 and how to protect yourself against the many challenges that the pandemic brings.

Use this information to stay safe, healthy and well and help to protect your families and friends.

Ask questions and share your experience. Phone us on XXX, SMS us on XXX or send a WhatsApp message on XXX to be part of this conversation.

Over the last eight weeks, we have shared factually correct information about the Coronavirus and COVID-19 disease. We have discussed each of the five Golden Rules which will protect us if we follow them. Let's look at them one last time:

ONE: Wash your hands and wash them well
TWO: Protect your space and keep others out
THREE: Cover your face and do not touch it
FOUR: Clean all the places which you touch
FIVE: If you feel sick, stay at home

Last week we also looked at another important way to protect ourselves – by making sure that there is flow of fresh air when you meet other people, either outside or inside with open windows and doors.

From this week on, we will discuss a range of other topics that are of interest to our listeners in this time of COVID-19. We decided on the topics after listening to your questions and concerns, and those of others in our country.

Today we talk about the many MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS about COVID-19 which circulate among us. You wanted to talk about this. So keep listening, and be part of the conversation!

I'm joined today by our health specialist, XXXX, as well as by XXX (youth facilitator).

Let us talk about it:

Why do many myths and misconceptions about COVID-19 circulate at the time?

COVID-19 has come at a time when people around the world rely heavily on social media for their information. In the beginning, there were far more questions than proven answers about

this new disease, and this created an ideal environment for an explosion of myths, unbased claims, false news and misconceptions.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) even talks of a 'massive infodemic': an overabundance of information – some accurate and some not.

As human beings, we also love to share news and information which seems new and exciting, and which is new to others. And we often we do it without being 100% sure whether it is accurate or not.

What damage can myths and misinformation do?

Myths, misconceptions and especially false information that is spread maliciously, makes it hard for people to find trustworthy sources and reliable guidance when they need it. This puts us all at risk.

Misinformation can be extremely damaging, especially when it encourages people to do things that could endanger their health, like for example, drinking bleach or disinfectant.

It can also lead to stigma and discrimination against groups of people, for example against people who are from China or who look Chinese, because of the myth that China created the virus in a laboratory.

Which are the most common, and the most damaging myths or misinformation?

Worldwide, there are common myths which circulate online and are listed as fact.

Here is the truth about a few common myths:

- 1 There are currently no proven cures for COVID-19. Taking hydroxychloroquine, or 'Covid-Organics' from Madagascar, or drinking bleach and disinfectant, will NOT cure COVID-19. But it could be dangerous.
- 2 5G Technology, house flies or mosquito bites cannot cause or spread COVID- 19.
- 3 Exposing yourself to high temperatures will not prevent COVID-19 infection. UV radiation should not be used on your skin and can be dangerous.
- 4 There is no evidence that the Coronavirus which causes COVID-19 was manufactured in a laboratory in China. It is a virus which was transmitted from animals to human beings.
- 5 There is currently no COVID-19 vaccine which has been scientifically tested. Once there is a vaccine which is distributed to populations in Africa, it will be safe to take it. Unproven vaccines will not be 'tested' in Africa.
- 6 Children and young people are NOT protected from the virus. They can get COVID-19, but they are less likely to get very sick.

Which myths and misconceptions are most common in our country?

The myths which we have mentioned are ones which have spread across the world. But there are others which circulate in our country. Let's talk about them.

Phone or SMS us to share myths which you have heard, or to check with our panellists whether what you have heard is true.

How can we help to stop the spread?

We all have a responsibility to stop the spread of myths and misinformation. Here are five ways to do it.

- 1 **Be critical** when you look at social media. Don't believe everything you see, hear or read, even if it is a great story!
- 2 When in doubt, **take time to check** the information. Ask yourself some questions:
 - Where does the story come from?
 - Can the source be trusted? Is there evidence to support it?
 - Do the people who spread the story benefit from it?
- 3 If you are in doubt, **ask a health expert** or check the World Health Organisation's COVID-19 'Myth Buster' site. Or send us a message.
- 4 **Don't leave false information in your online networks.** You can politely ask the person who shared it to remove it.
- 5 Make more noise than the people who share false information, and **keep sharing correct information.**

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS TO THE PANEL

To the health specialist:

- 1 Do you agree that myths and misinformation are a problem in our country?
- 2 Which are some others which you know about and which are a problem?
- 3 What advice do you have for how listeners can check the facts, or stop the spread of misinformation?

To the youth facilitator/second panellist:

- 1 Which are the myths that go around in your school or community?
- 2 Do you sometimes find it difficult to know what is fact and what is not? How do you plan to deal with it in future?

Extra information for radio presenters to draw on, if you need it.

Refer to the World Health Organisation (WHO) 'Myth Busters', which have been shared with you.

SMS TOPIC 9:

There are many myths and misinformation about COVID-19, which can be harmful. Stop their spread. Check social media messages and make sure the facts are correct. If in doubt, ask a health expert. If you know the news is false, do not share it and let others know. *Tune in to XXXXXXXX every XXXXday from XXXXXXXX. To opt out send 'stop' to XXXXXX.* (282 characters)