

Clearing misunderstandings about new round of COVID-19 infections in city

Wang Yong

PEOPLE should guard against several misunderstandings in dealing with the current round of COVID-19 infections, a senior journalist in Shanghai said in a widely circulated video on Saturday.

Based on his latest talks with a number of medical professionals, Yan Qiuqiu, a senior reporter with Xinmin Evening News, a leading local newspaper, said people should not be too worried about the ongoing outbreak, adding that four types of misunderstanding need to be cleared up.

The first misunderstanding is that those who have been twice infected with COVID-19 can resume their usual pace of work and life as soon as they test negative, because their symptoms are mild, being similar to the flu.

"This is wrong," Yan explained. "Those who are infected for the second time may have mild symptoms and turn negative quickly, but that doesn't necessarily mean the harm to their health is less severe.

"In theory, each infection inflicts harm on one's health," he said. "From the perspective of a physician, a full recovery usually takes at least two weeks."

Secondly, from now on, one doesn't have to wear a mask, now that repeat infections are inevitable.

"This is also wrong," Yan said. "Theoretically speaking, most people will eventually be infected multiple times, but wearing a mask in crowded places and washing hands constantly can reduce the frequency of infection. For example, while others are infected five times in three years, you might be infected only three times. That way you can reduce the harm to your immune systems."

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Yan Qiuqiu

Senior reporter with Xinmin Evening News

Thirdly, one can inject any type of vaccine to boost one's antibody power.

"This is wrong, too," Yan said. "If people need to have COVID-19 vaccines, they should choose those specifically targeting the prevailing XBB variants."

Lastly, one gets half a year's immune power each time he or she gets infected.

"Wrong!" Yan cautioned. "Although an infection can in theory help one acquire certain immune power, in reality there are exceptions, because viruses evolve and people's metabolic levels vary."

For example, he said, some people were twice infected in just three and a half months.

"Fundamentally speaking, we should strengthen our immune system through exercises, rather than infection," he concluded.

Advice well received

Yan's video has been retweeted more than 100,000 times, and got 22,000 "likes" and nearly 1,000 comments, most of which are positive.

His advice is balanced and timely, particularly because he has consulted professional physicians. Yet the devil is



People use swing steppers at the community's outdoor fitness park. — Wang Yong

in the detail.

Yan was right in saying that wearing a mask may reduce one's chances of getting infected, thereby reducing the potential harm to one's health. To this I would add that wearing a mask may also be an altruistic behavior, when one is not yet fully recovered from an infection.

In reality, many people use rapid antigen tests, instead of nucleic ones, to decide whether they have turned negative. Many physicians have pointed out that one might still carry a small amount of viruses within the first few days of turning negative for a rapid

antigen test.

For example, I was infected on May 12, and turned negative in about one week according to a rapid antigen test. Now I seem to be the only one who wears a mask in my neighborhood. I'm not worried about being infected, I just don't want to infect others, even if there's only 0.01 percent of such possibility.

Each time I met a neighbor or a courier in the past two weeks, I would tell them that I was still recovering and that they would better stay 2 meters away from me. They all gave me an understanding smile.

China is not the only country to take such actions. Italy has temporarily banned ChatGPT and launched a probe over associated suspected breaches of privacy rules.

In the United States, Sam Altman, chief executive of OpenAI and the developer of ChatGPT, asked for AI regulation during a recent Senate Judiciary subcommittee hearing.

"My worst fears are that we cause significant — we, the field, the technology industry — cause significant harm to the world," he said in a report by China Daily. "We think that regulatory intervention by governments will be critical to mitigate the risks of increasingly powerful models."

The AI Act, the world's first legislation governing AI, will be issued soon after members of the European Parliament voted on May 11 to advance draft regulations on rules about facial recognition, biometric surveillance and other generative AI tools.



The official account of Liu Yexi is hosted on the short video platform Douyin. — Tian Shengjie