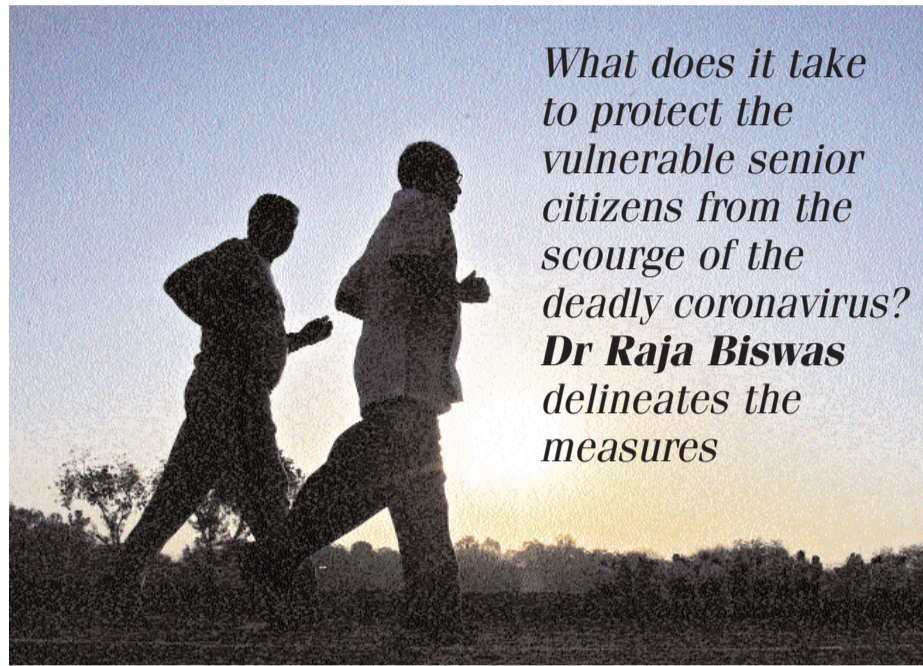


UNLOCK POSITIVITY

CONSUMER CONNECT INITIATIVE

Redeeming The Elderly



What does it take to protect the vulnerable senior citizens from the scourge of the deadly coronavirus? Dr Raja Biswas delineates the measures

Amanda and Anita have never met, and neither are they ever likely to. They live in two different continents about 8,162 km apart. Amanda lives in the city of Cardiff, Wales, and Anita in my home city of Kolkata. But in spite of the distance, they have lots in common. Amanda and Anita have both been living in the shadow of Coronavirus, over the last six months although neither have, fortunately, actually contracted the virus! Both are on the wrong side of 80, with their now grown up children living far away from them. Both rarely leave the house for fear of the virus, and this has meant that gradually they are becoming weaker and frailer. They are also both well known to me — Amanda is my patient and Anita is my mother. We now know BC as “Before Corona” and its sometimes difficult to convince ourselves how much life has changed since March 2020. Did we really go wherever we wanted without wearing masks or

socially distancing? Did we really not have to worry about lockdowns? We ignored the slightest cough or temperature. And saying to the wife, that food has no taste, caused a raised eyebrow rather than a rush to the doctor! However, the brunt of the ill effect of the virus has been borne by senior citizens, and its likely to continue on into the future as well. The virus has resulted in more deaths amongst the elderly, with someone over 80 being five times more likely to die than someone younger. This is related to comorbidities and reduced immunity within the older age group. The sheer threat of contracting the virus, is alone having a negative effect on our senior citizens — both physically and mentally and sadly, this is likely to continue. Most senior citizens have multiple comorbidities, which worsen during inactivity. Even two weeks of physical inactivity can cause a loss of 25% of muscle

strength, resulting in difficulty in walking and pain in joints, which makes any activity of daily living (ADL) a challenge. This puts the elderly on a slippery downward slope, from which most will not recover.

It is recommended that senior citizens should undertake at least three hours of moderate physical activity per week which equates to around 30 minutes per day. This can take the form of yoga, if possible, or a walk within or outside the house, enjoying fresh air but taking the precautions of social distancing. Being confined indoors can cause lack of exposure to sunlight and therefore low Vitamin D, resulting in bone loss and weakness. A simple fall can then lead to a fracture. So regular walk outside not only strengthens the body but also refreshes the mind. Cardiac deconditioning often happens due to inactivity resulting in minor tasks causing fatigue. Maintaining a balanced diet — with a glass of milk/ yogurt every day — will aid strengthening of bones and muscles.

An increase in smoking or alcohol intake can happen due to boredom and unwise coping mechanisms caused by isolation. Both are injurious especially in excess and happens in all age groups.

Coronavirus can have a devastating effect on mental wellbeing, and this often can go unrecognised in the elderly. Being away from loved ones and being socially isolated causes anxiety, stress and depression which, in turn, leads to insomnia, and sometimes suicidal thoughts. Many senior citizens aren't familiar with the internet and often rely on TV channels for information. A constant diet of doom and gloom on the airwaves can further exacerbate the feeling of anxiety. The breakdown of the social circle is perhaps the most devastating consequence and effect on seniors. Being able to have a reliable circle of support — either within family or neighbours or friends is absolutely vital. Spiritual support in the form of meditation can help in calming the feeling of anxiety and depression to a great extent.

It is likely the virus will be with us for a long time and in the absence of an effective vaccine or treatment, we must learn to adapt and live with the change in circumstances. At this challenging time being extra vigilant and supporting our senior citizens — neighbours, relatives or friends — is vital. After all, they deserve all the support that can be provided by a caring and humane society at this even greater time of need.

*(The writer is a consultant physician in medicine and clinical director, based in Royal Glamorgan Hospital, South Wales, UK.)
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From reducing the risk of heart diseases, improving blood circulation to fighting infections and immunity, tea has a lot of medicinal benefits

Elixir of life

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Indians and tea have a unique connection. Every get together, every discussion and every highlight of the day is accompanied with a cup of tea in India. Strong geographical indications, investments in tea processing units, continuous innovation and strategic market expansion have led to Indian tea being counted among the finest in the world. Assam in northeast India and Darjeeling in north Bengal are the main tea-growing regions. According to IBEF, India is one of the world's largest consumers of tea, with about three-fourths of the country's total produce consumed locally!

•• Boosting Immunity

Tea leaves have several therapeutic qualities which help prevent many diseases among regular drinkers. “Green tea has 80-90% high antioxidant called catechins and 20% flavonoids whereas black tea contains high amount of tannins which gives us instant energy, improves serotonin and increases ones hormones called oxytocin,” shares Priya Agarwal, dietician.

In these testing times, as we are all asked to keep our immunity strong, Dipika Singh, clinical nutritionist shares that, “Green tea is blessed with diverse anti-inflammatory, antioxidant and anti-enzymatic activities which can strengthen our immune system by preventing oxidative stress and autoimmune diseases. On the other hand, chamomile tea helps in boosting our body's production of WBCs that can destroy viruses, bacteria and fungi.”

•• Improves Health

The flavonoids in tea improve the function of the lining inside the blood vessels, cardiac valves and other body cavities thus helping in reducing the risk of cardiovascular diseases like heart attacks, strokes etc. Caffeine and methylxanthines like theobromine present in the



CHEERS TO THE CUPPA

TYPES OF TEA	BENEFITS
Chamomile tea	Helps with Insomnia and anxiety
Peppermint tea	Helps in bettering digestive issues
Ginger Tea	Relieves body ache, cold, sinus, stomach ulcer, constipation
Hibiscus Tea	Brings down blood pressure and relieves stress
Black Tea	Improves Heart health
Sage Tea	Improves memory

tea increases the rate of metabolism, reduce your caloric intake and burns fat. Hence, tea can prevent any obesity related diseases by improving the metabolism of glucose, lipid and uric acid. Not only that, Vitamin A and E present in the tea helps to purify blood internally and keep away all your skin problems.

•• Hitting Hard

According to the Indian Tea Association, the lockdown has hit the tea industry in West Bengal and Assam hard, with estimated production loss to the tune of 140 million kgs, entailing a loss in revenue so far totalling around ₹ 2,100 crore. Around 1000 tea gardens in the two states have lost their first flush.

“Currently, a lot of migrant labour from outside returned to the gardens, thereby improving the labour shortage scenario up to a certain extent. This pandemic has made the consumer more concerned about safety and hygiene and has shifted their consumption from loose tea to packaged tea. The producer has also realised that production of quality tea and not quantity is the better option and offers better returns in the long run,” shares Atul Asthana, MD and CEO of a tea producing company.

Arundhati