

## Vital to boost immune system, says group

NATION 

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KUALA LUMPUR: Strengthening our immune system is within our control and should be the first line of defence against infections, says Malaysian Medical Association president Dr N. Ganabaskaran.

Besides being disciplined in observing social distancing and good personal hygiene, one must get proper nutrition from a balanced diet, regular exercise and good quality rest to boost the immune system and protect against infections, he said. He said those with weak immune systems should stay home or work from home if possible.

“Those who frequently catch the flu in a year may need to take extra precautions as this could indicate a weak immune system.

“They should also seek medical attention immediately if they catch the flu,” said Dr Ganabaskaran.

He said crowd control was needed at high traffic areas such as shopping malls, transportation hubs, markets, restaurants and parks.

While business owners must actively help enforce social distancing and keep their premises clean and disinfected frequently, volunteer groups at residential areas can help crowd control by working closely with the police.

It might be necessary to start auxiliary police to enforce social distancing in certain high-density areas, especially at transportation hubs, said Dr Ganabaskaran.

He said supermarkets and shopping malls should consider extending hours to reduce crowds at their premises, if it is allowed.

He also urged employers not to rush into restarting their businesses but to take time to understand the standard operating procedure (SOP) and brief key people in their organisations to ensure full compliance of guidelines.

“Some repositioning of office furniture or equipment may be necessary to ensure proper social distancing,” he added.



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Medical Practitioners Coalition Association of Malaysia president Dr M. Raj Kumar said the government should deploy “ambassadors” to ensure safe distancing by training and supporting the public.

He said they could come from agencies, or from among civil society organisation volunteers and professionals who are currently unemployed.

“The conditional movement control order (MCO) requires people to be disciplined and adhere to the guidelines provided for by the government,” he said.

Malaysian Public Health Medicine Specialist Association Datuk Dr Zainal Ariffin said for the coming Hari Raya Aidilfitri, those celebrating should celebrate it in their own homes only.

Besides enforcement agencies enforcing the SOP, he said industry players must make sure they also do the same while those returning to work should adhere strictly to the new normal.

He added that the public can help by increasing their health awareness, being involved in continuous surveillance in their neighbourhoods and reporting to the authorities if they find people breaching the SOP or holding public gatherings. While not objecting to the easing of the MCO, Universiti Malaya Academician Emeritus Professor Datuk Dr Lam Sai Kit said it was done too soon.

He said Malaysia had not managed to minimise hot spots and more areas were put under enhanced MCO, while its testing capacity was still not adequate as compared to other countries. He also expressed concern that if the country faced a resurgence of cases, the MCO would have to be reinstated and it would be a waste of efforts that had been put in by the government, the frontliners and the public.

While he was aware of the economic cost of implementing the MCO – which has resulted in a total loss estimated at RM63bil since it was implemented – Dr Lam said a better exit plan than the conditional MCO was needed, with phased opening of sectors or businesses and with emphasis on safety rather than a fast economic recovery.

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