



Rooted in Trust is a global and local humanitarian response by Internews that aims to combat the spread of rumors and misinformation around COVID-19 in Lebanon.

Internews and its partner Maharat Foundation are collecting rumors reported across Lebanese social media in an effort to combat misinformation to provide vulnerable communities with accurate information.

This rumor bulletin presents four major rumors circulated on social media about COVID-19 between October 17 and November 7. Rumors covered the following topics:

- Prevention measures
- COVID-19 is a hoax
- Long-term impacts of the virus
- Differences and similarities between COVID-19 and seasonal flu

The rumors highlighted here were confirmed to also be circulating by word of mouth among Syrian and Palestinian refugee communities, according to NGOs and UN field staff.

COVID-19 SITUATION IN LEBANON

During the first week of November, Lebanon reported the highest weekly deaths due to COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic, with daily cases reaching around 2,000 per day.

Lockdown measures were taken once again in different areas around Lebanon to control the outbreak and give the health care system time to adapt to the spike in cases, but adherence to lockdown measures was low across the country.

On November 15, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported 104,267 cumulative cases of COVID-19 and 806 deaths.

For Medical emergencies, refugees can contact **NEXTCARE's hotline at 01 50 40 20**. They can also go directly to any of the hospitals below and then will be referred to NEXTCARE during working hours.

- Halba Governmental hospital
- Tripoli Governmental Hospital
- Zahle Governmental Hospital
- Baalbek Governmental Hospital
- Rafic Hariri University Hospital
- Baabda Governmental Hospital
- Saida Governmental Hospital

“
World Health Organization (WHO)
01-612970 | 01612971 | 01612972

“
Ministry of Public Health (MOPH)
Hotline: 1214
Call Center: 01-594459

“
NextCare Hotline
For refugees registered or not registered with UNHCR
01-504020



WHAT'S IN A RUMOUR?

Rumors are unverified information collected from a first-hand source within the community that could take the shape of a question, criticism, or general comment about a situation or topic.

In this bulletin, rumours were collected as data points from across various platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp by Internews and Maharat from October 17 to November 7.

RUMOUR #1

Almost a year into the pandemic, many people still believe that COVID-19 is a hoax. There are several reasons behind this misconception related to fear, stigma, political events, and the economic crisis.

ANSWER

It is essential to highlight that the way we talk about the virus plays a vital role in its spread, and disbelief in COVID-19 has already cost lives.

The WHO publishes daily updates for confirmed cases and death rates due to COVID-19 in Lebanon: https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1

The International Committee of the Red Cross developed a series to highlight the impact of COVID-19 in Ain El Helwe Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ktYsCzGqRLU&list=PLulvDtcD9wioohBdFE5IMP PDT1iFinDji&index=7>

RUMOUR #2

Over the past two weeks, social media posts have argued the viability of using vitamins, zinc, Panadol, and antibiotics as prevention or treatment for COVID-19.

ANSWER

No research so far has proven that home remedies prevent or treat COVID-19. If any are found effective, the WHO and health agencies will recommend its usage through their platforms. Some at-home prevention methods can help lessen symptoms, others can have negative health impacts, such as the un-prescribed use of zinc, antibiotics, or Aspirin.

According to the National Institute of Health, high zinc intake can cause nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, abdominal cramps, diarrhea, and headaches. <https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/Zinc-HealthProfessional/>

The overuse and misuse of antibiotics can have serious long-term effects on health. If not properly used, they can lead to antibacterial resistance and then prove inefficient during serious illnesses or with infections. COVID-19 is caused by a virus and antibiotics will not work treating it. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/media-resources/science-in-5/episode-11---antibiotics-covid-19>

WHO Lebanon has several hotlines where people can inquire about COVID-19 symptoms, isolation options, and other available services: **01-612970 | 01-612971 | 01-612972**

RUMOUR #3

One rumor collected mentioned that the COVID-19 vaccination is currently being administered in schools in Lebanon.

ANSWER

To date, there is no vaccine for COVID-19 in Lebanon. As of October 27, the WHO confirmed that Lebanon has applied to participate in a vaccination initiative to administer COVID-19 vaccines for up to 20% of the Lebanese population, and discussions are ongoing between UNICEF, WHO, and the World Bank to prepare the program for when the vaccine is ready.

To know more about how to identify fake news, follow ICRC key messages: <https://www.facebook.com/ICRCarabic/photos/a.2953524558019759/2953527498019465/>

RUMOUR #4

Long-term impacts of COVID-19 infection such as heart disease, psychological diseases, decrease in oxygen supply to the brain, and skin problems were discussed across different platforms.

ANSWER

According to the WHO, some symptoms may linger or recur for weeks or months following initial recovery. This can also happen in people even with mild COVID-19 symptoms. People are not necessarily contagious to others if they are experiencing long-lasting impacts of COVID-19.

https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/risk-comms-updates/update-36-long-term-symptoms.pdf?sfvrsn=5d3789a6_2

RUMOUR #5

Confusion has been expressed across social media on the difference between the flu and COVID-19 in terms of symptoms, PCR tests, and vaccination.

ANSWER

COVID-19 and influenza have some similarities in symptoms and in how they are transmitted. However, COVID-19 is transmitted between people at a quicker rate than the flu, and initial analysis shows that mortality for COVID-19 appears higher death rates due to the flu.

The Polymerase Chain reaction test (PCR) is a rapid and sensitive test used to detect different types of viruses and other human pathogens. However, the PCR used to detect COVID-19 is not designed to detect other influenza viruses. Therefore, you will not have a positive result if you have the flu.

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/question-and-answers-hub/q-a-detail/q-a-similarities-and-differences-covid-19-and-influenza>

The flu is characterized by a sudden onset of fever, cough (usually dry), headache, muscle and joint pain, severe malaise (feeling unwell), sore throat, and a runny nose. The cough can be severe and can last two or more weeks. https://www.who.int/health-topics/influenza-seasonal#tab=tab_2



RUMOUR #6

A video of a doctor in Washington discussing the use of Aspirin to decrease the rates of ICU admission, mechanical ventilation, and mortality due to COVID-19. was covered by Lebanese media outlet Al Jadeed and on the outlet's Facebook page.

Clinical trials are ongoing to test Aspirin's benefits on COVID-19 patients. Some studies to suggest that Aspirin helps thin the blood in severe cases of blood clots. However, there is still no exact evidence to date that confirms Aspirin's success for COVID-19 patients.

ANSWER

You should always consult your doctor before taking any kind of drugs. Even a low dose of Aspirin is not suitable for certain people and it's extremely risky for children.

<https://www.facebook.com/AlJadeedTV/videos/819776595454453>

<https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/low-dose-aspirin/>