



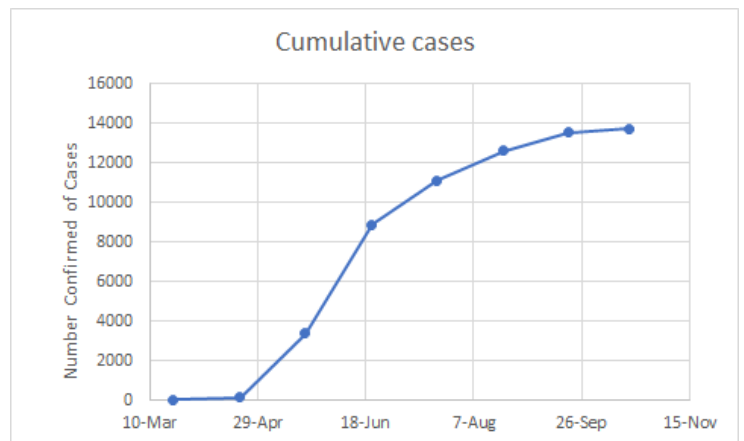
**In Sudan the Rooted in Trust (RiT) project** aims to respond to misinformation about COVID-19. This first bulletin is based on 45 Arabic language posts compiled from Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp. The rumors identified have been assessed to be the most prevalent or damaging to the health response. Rumor selection was based on the level of engagement and its potential impact on the community.

In this week's bulletin we shed light on rumors of a COVID-19 hoax, perceived "immunity" among babies and children, permanent loss of smell, mistrust in testing, and herbal remedies. This regular collection of community insights aims to address questions and common misperceptions about COVID-19 found across Sudan. It aims to help volunteers and field staff provide fact-based answers to their communities' questions and concerns.

## COVID-19 SITUATION IN SUDAN

Sudan reported its first case of COVID-19 in March 2020. As of 22 October, the official number has risen to 13,724. Most cases identified have been in the capital Khartoum and surrounding areas. Outbreaks were reported in conflict-affected areas such as North Darfur, but limited testing capacity has made it difficult to identify its true extent. Sudan's health system suffers from years of underfunding, lack of staff, human resources, medicines, materials, equipment and medical supplies. This has been exacerbated by devastating flooding and the current economic emergency.

### THE REALITY OF COVID-19 IN SUDAN



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**MINISTRY OF HEALTH**

**COVID-19 HOTLINE - SERVING ALL AREAS OF SUDAN: 9090**

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**SUDAN HEALTH OBSERVATORY**

**[WWW.SHO.GOV.SD/CONTROLLER](http://WWW.SHO.GOV.SD/CONTROLLER)**

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**WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION**

**[WWW.EMRO.WHO.INT/AR](http://WWW.EMRO.WHO.INT/AR)**

**COVID-19 IS REAL AND THERE ARE NEW CASES DIAGNOSED ALL THE TIME! BE SAFE AND PRACTICE HEALTH AND SAFETY PRECAUTIONS.**

#### WHAT ARE RUMORS?

**RUMORS ARE CURRENTLY CIRCULATING STORIES OR UNVERIFIED REPORTS OF UNCERTAIN OR DOUBTFUL INFORMATION COLLECTED FROM FIRST-HAND SOURCES WITHIN THE COMMUNITY WHICH COULD TAKE THE SHAPE OF A QUESTION, CRITICISM, OR GENERAL COMMENTS ON A SITUATION OR TOPIC. RUMORS CAN BE TRICKY BECAUSE THEY MIGHT HAVE SOME TRUTH IN THEM!**



## RUMOUR #1

“Grind acacia leaves and mix the powder with sesame oil in a jar. Massage the mixture onto your body, just make sure you are wearing a mask and that you disinfect afterwards. Focus on applying the mixture on your chest and throat, may God cure you. This remedy can treat a diabetes patient in intensive care. Also, eat a lot of oranges for Vitamin C.”

- Female, Facebook user

Often people recommend their favorite homemade and herbal remedies to treat the symptoms of COVID-19. Acacia is commonly used in Sudan to treat illnesses, ranging from a mild cold to diabetes. It has been passed from generation to generation as an effective and affordable home remedy.

ANSWER

### HOW SAFE IS ACACIA?

Although Acacia has shown some benefits, drinking it directly has been proven to be hazardous to the body. There is no evidence that Acacia concentrated extract is an effective prevention or treatment measure for COVID-19. Since COVID-19 is a new virus, at present there are no known pharmaceutical or traditional cures. Preventative measures such as handwashing, physical distancing and the use of masks remain the best ways to avoid catching the disease.

### CAN ORANGES AND VITAMIN C PROTECT US FROM COVID-19?

Vitamins D and C and zinc are critical for a well-functioning immune system and play a vital role in promoting health and nutritional well-being. However, there is no evidence to suggest that these can prevent or cure COVID-19. Although large amounts of dietary vitamin C are unlikely to be harmful, taking too many vitamin C supplements may cause unpleasant symptoms of nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

## RUMOUR #2

“China said Corona is a hoax. All over the country people are waiting in lines, if Corona is real, we would find it in every home.” -Male, Facebook

China has not said that COVID-19 is a hoax and has reported some 91,500 cases to date. It is possible the number of cases dropped since the virus outbreak due to the Chinese common precedent for mask-wearing and because of its very strict lockdown at the start of the pandemic. However, due to the difficult nature of confirming the facts, it is impossible to estimate the extent of the outbreak in China.

ANSWER

Although the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says the risk of transmission of COVID-19 is lower outside (where most queuing occurs) than indoors or on public transport, it is not zero. Many people who are infected with COVID-19 may develop no or few symptoms, not all cases are visible. In crowded areas, including bakeries and gas stations, where long queues are common, people should maintain a distance of at least one meter from each other to minimize the risk.



## RUMOUR #3

“The mother should breastfeed the baby and bring down his temperature with Panadol.” - Female Facebook user

ANSWER

Mothers should not give their babies Panadol or any other medication before consulting with a doctor. Although social media is a great space for discussions on a variety of topics, we should avoid seeking unverified medical advice from non-professionals that may delay a correct diagnosis and lead to the baby’s health getting worse.

Corona and breastfeeding  
The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that mothers who have tested positive for COVID-19 continue breastfeeding their babies. The mother should also continue breastfeeding if the baby contracts COVID-19. There is no evidence that the virus can be transmitted through breast milk. Nutrients from breastfeeding are essential for the baby’s development and help build stronger immunity. However, it is always recommended to seek medical advice from your doctor.

The best way to protect our children:

- Wear a face mask.
- Wash your hands, and avoid touching your face, especially your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Keep a safe distance at least one meter from others.

## RUMOUR #4

“Peace be upon you, I tested for COVID-19 and the result came out negative. I have severe joint pain all over my body, and sharper pain in the shoulders. I have chest tightness, but I do not have difficulty breathing. It is affecting me. My question is – is it possible that I have been infected with COVID-19 even if the test result is negative?”

ANSWER

According to Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), it is possible to test negative for COVID-19 if you tested at the initial stages of your infection. You may also contract the virus after testing negative.

If you have tested negative while experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, it is even more important to follow the precautions set by the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization, including wearing a mask in public, washing our hands with soap and water for 40 seconds, and maintaining a physical distance of at least one meter from others, and if possible to self-isolate until you feel better.

## RUMOUR #5

“Is there hope that I can smell again after four months?” – Female Facebook user

ANSWER

Hospitals worldwide report that between 34 and 98 percent of hospitalized patients with COVID-19 will temporarily lose their sense of smell. However, scientists at Harvard Medical School say that this is unlikely to be permanent as the virus does not damage the nasal cell types associated with smelling.

## RUMOUR #6

“When winter comes, corona will be back.” - Facebook user

ANSWER

This rumor is common in several African countries, leading people to conclude that warmer weather protects them from the virus. According to the World Health Organization western countries have experienced a dramatic spike in cases as temperatures have dropped. It remains unclear why this is, however, it is thought that increased socializing indoors and difficulty to maintain sufficient social distance could have led to this rise.

## RUMOUR #7

“COVID-19 will do nothing to us because it is very hot in Sudan.” Female Facebook User

ANSWER

According to the World Health Organization COVID-19 can be transmitted in any climate, including very hot and very cold weather. The best way to protect yourself from the virus is by washing your hands, wearing a face mask or covering and practicing social distancing in public places. Soap is very effective in killing the virus, so make sure to always wash your hands using soap and clean water to protect yourself and others.

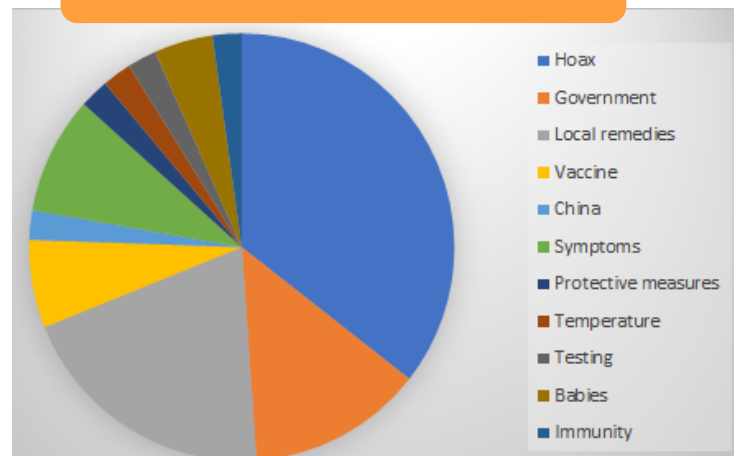
## RUMOUR #8

“Children cannot become infected with the coronavirus, and if they have COVID-19 they have no symptoms - maybe just a cough.” -Female Facebook user

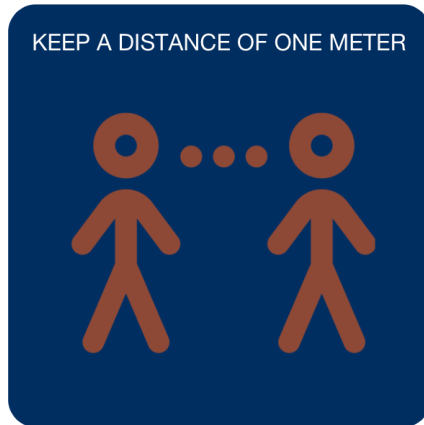
ANSWER

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), people of all ages, including babies, children and adults can contract COVID-19. Those that have chronic medical conditions, such as diabetes and heart disease, appear to be at increased risk of developing more severe symptoms of the virus, and taking longer to recover. This vulnerable demographic also registers a higher mortality rate. Since COVID-19 is a new virus, we are still learning exactly how it affects children, and the long-term impacts of the virus remain unclear. People hold the misperception that children cannot catch the virus because relatively few exhibit more extreme symptoms. This does not mean they cannot transmit the disease to other members of their families who may be more seriously affected.

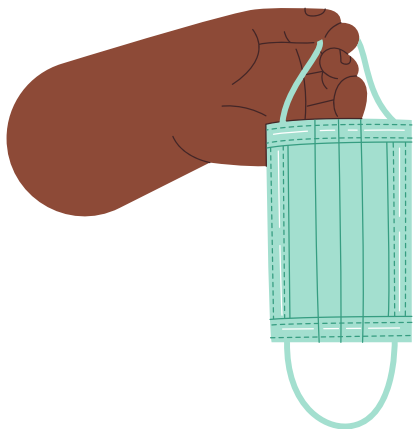
## TOP RUMOR THEMES



*Thematic breakdown of 45 COVID-19 social media rumors collected between 5 and 22 October, 2020.*



Take Care! The best way to avoid catching and spreading COVID-19 is to follow the preventive measures!



## HOW TO KNOW IF YOU HAVE COVID-19?

Have you been in close contact with someone who has been diagnosed positive with COVID-19?

Yes

NO

Do you have any symptoms such as fever, cough, or a sore throat?

Keep following the basic biosecurity recommendations

Yes

NO

Request a PCR test. Did the test show a positive result?

Follow a 14-day strict quarantine and be vigilant of symptoms

Yes

NO

Follow a 14-day strict quarantine or the recommended treatment by a licensed doctor based on the severity of the symptoms

Follow a 14-day strict quarantine and be vigilant of symptoms

