



Internews

COMMUNITY BULLETIN #1
MARCH 2022

The Sudan Rooted in Trust (RiT) project aims to address COVID-19 rumors, perceptions, and misinformation by collecting and analyzing rumors found on Sudanese social media. This bulletin is based on an analysis of 113 posts collected in Arabic between 17 January and 15 February 2022, from Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp.

In this week’s bulletin we shed light on a variety of rumors, such as COVID-19 is just like the common cold, vaccines are not effective, vitamins and antibiotics as treatment, and reinfection from the use of personal items. This regular collection of community insights aims to address questions and common misperceptions about COVID-19 found across Sudan. It is meant to help volunteers and field staff provide trustworthy information, and resources to help respond to their communities’ concerns and information needs around COVID-19 and the vaccines.

COVID-19 in Sudan

As of 15 March 2022, the official COVID-19 statistics rose to 61,715 confirmed cases, compared to 59,939 confirmed cases on 14 February 2022. As of 14 February 2022, about 5% of Sudan’s population had been vaccinated, and a total of 5,711,034 vaccine doses had been administered.

How are rumors collected?

Misconceptions, questions, and comments about COVID-19 were collected by Internews’ analysts, who compiled and assessed feedback gathered from Sudanese social media. The rumors, perceptions and misinformation identified have been assessed to be the most prevalent or damaging to the health response. Selection was based on the level of engagement and potential harm to the community.

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MINISTRY OF HEALTH
COVID-19 HOTLINE - SERVING ALL
AREAS OF SUDAN: 9090

“
MINISTRY OF HEALTH FACEBOOK
PAGE
WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/FMOH.SUDAN

“
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
WWW.EMRO.WHO.INT/AR



COVID-19 IS REAL AND THERE ARE NEW CASES DIAGNOSED ALL THE TIME!
BE SAFE: MAINTAIN PHYSICAL DISTANCE, WASH YOUR HANDS, WEAR A MASK

WHAT ARE RUMORS?

Rumors are currently circulating stories or UNVERIFIED content 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 element of truth in them!

RUMOUR
ANSWER

RUMOR RISK LEVEL HIGH MEDIUM LOW

RUMOUR #1

TREATMENT/CURE

“No need to worry he can take antibiotic, vitamin C, and fizzy Zinc.. The orange Panadol is also good. I know people who also used the coughing syrup medicine, eat well, hot soups help as well.. I am not a doctor but this is what we did. speedy recovery” Woman -Facebook

Vitamins play an essential role in promoting a healthy immune system, but they cannot prevent us from contracting a COVID-19 infection. The best way to get essential nutrients and vitamins is through a balanced diet, rich in fruits and vegetables. There is currently no medical guidance on using vitamin supplements as a preventative for COVID-19.

Antibiotics are used to prevent and treat bacterial infections. The misuse and overuse of antibiotics can cause antibiotic resistance. Antibiotic resistance occurs when bacteria change in response to the use of these medicines, which can make diseases such as pneumonia and foodborne diseases harder to treat.

COVID-19 is caused by a virus, antibiotics do not work against viruses. There is no globally approved medication to cure COVID-19. If you develop any symptoms, you should take a PCR test, and contact a doctor for advice on the best practices in case of infection.

HIGH RISK

RUMOUR #2

STIGMA

“I swear the numbers are higher, but people see [having] COVID-19 as shameful” Man - Facebook

The COVID-19 virus has been spreading globally since early 2020 with more than 414,525,183 confirmed cases globally according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Anyone can contract the virus and getting infected with COVID-19 does not mean that you are less than anyone else. We should recognize that people who have contracted COVID-19 have done nothing wrong and we should not treat them differently.

There are various ways of looking after our health and protecting ourselves and loved ones from the virus, such as following the protective measures set by the Ministry of Health and the WHO. If you develop COVID-19 symptoms, please make sure to get tested in your nearest testing center as soon as possible and isolate until you receive the results. For those that test positive, please self-isolate for 10 days to reduce the risks of spreading the virus. If you test negative, make sure to follow the precautions set by the Ministry of Health, such as maintaining a physical distance of 1 meter from others, covering your mouth and nose with a mask or a face cover, washing your hands with soap and water, and avoiding congested or crowded areas. If it is available, you should also wash your hands with soap and water. Current evidence suggests that people with mild to moderate symptoms are usually no longer infectious 10 days after symptoms started.

To find the nearest vaccination center to you, please visit the Ministry of Health’s Facebook page for the latest updates.

MEDIUM RISK

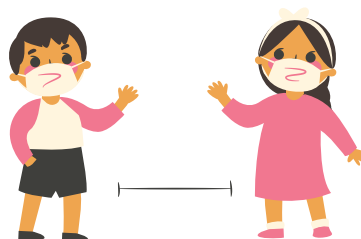


Clean everything

Disinfect surfaces using soap and water



How do we keep our children safe during the school year?



Physical Distancing

Keep a distance of one meter

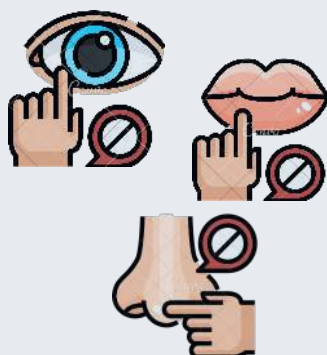
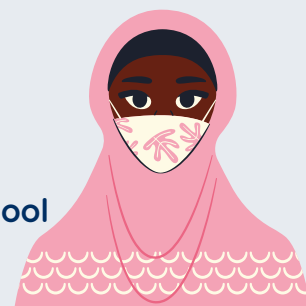


Stay at home

Stay at home if you feel sick

Wear a mask

Wear your mask at school and when in public



Don't touch your face

Don't touch your eyes, nose and mouth



Wash your hands

Wash your hands with soap and water for 40 seconds

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

RUMOUR #3

PREJUDICE/STIGMA

“Vaccinate the native citizens first then you can vaccinate the refugees” Man -Facebook

COVID-19 is a global pandemic which impacts people from all parts of the world. To end this pandemic, we need to unite and fight it together as one. Ensuring that refugees are included in the national vaccine plan reduces the risk of the virus being transmitted in these populations, and across the country. Therefore, it is important to advocate for national equity and equal access to COVID-19 vaccines within our communities.

Sudanese citizens and refugees over 18 years old are eligible for a COVID-19 vaccination. The COVID-19 vaccines have been provided by COVAX facility—which provides donated vaccines to low and middle-income countries around the world—with the same protocol being applied for both Sudanese nationals, refugees and migrants. The Ministry of Health is taking the lead with the support of UNHCR and other health partners, like WHO and UNICEF, to ensure vaccinations are accessible to refugees as well across Sudan.

Exclusion of vulnerable communities from the pandemic health response can create a higher risk of contracting the virus for everybody. Including refugees and migrants in the national vaccine plans and strategies is vital, as it reduces the risk of contracting the virus, thus lowering the death rate of COVID-19 within our communities.

MEDIUM RISK

RUMOUR #4

SAFETY

“I had two strokes, 20 days apart, after I took two doses of the Pfizer vaccine. My case was difficult. If I had known this information about the Corona vaccine, I would not have taken it”
Man -Facebook

Vaccines help our bodies fight harmful viruses that could be life-threatening. Throughout history, vaccines have helped save millions of lives, they undergo rigorous testing for safety before being authorized for public use. The COVID-19 vaccines help our bodies' immune system to recognize and fight the virus. When you get vaccinated, your body is prepared to fight the virus as soon as it enters your system.

According to the World Health Organization, COVID-19 vaccines have been proven to be safe for people with underlying medical conditions that could increase the risk of suffering from severe symptoms. However, in rare cases people who get the COVID-19 vaccine can develop severe symptoms similar to those caused by the COVID-19 virus but there are no studies that link strokes directly to COVID-19 approved vaccines.

If you have concerns about taking the vaccine or have chronic diseases, please consult with your doctor. Should you experience severe or prolonged symptoms after taking the COVID-19 vaccine, you can seek support by calling the national hotline number: 9090. If you need urgent support, please visit the nearest healthcare facility.

MEDIUM RISK

RUMOUR #5

SAFETY

“No to vaccines.. not for citizens or refugees... vaccines are unsafe and ineffective. They cause heart problems, diabetes, swollen glands, clots, and Barry’s boil syndrome.. and may cause death.. the disease, God willing, has a cure rate of 99 percent.” Woman -Facebook

COVID-19 can have serious complications that could lead to loss of life. Anyone can contract the virus if they come in contact with a sick person, which may leave you, your family and your community at risk.

The COVID-19 vaccines have undergone rigorous testing and clinical trials to ensure their safety. The current authorized COVID-19 vaccines have been found to be safe for public use, and in Sudan, health authorities are vaccinating the public utilizing the following vaccines: Pfizer, Johnsons & Johnson’s Janssen, Sinopharm, and AstraZeneca. They provide protection against the virus and teach our bodies to fight the virus that comes with a COVID-19 infection.

Minor symptoms following a COVID-19 vaccination are common and may last a few days, including arm soreness, fatigue and fever. Various studies have shown that adverse events (severe health complications due to vaccinations) are extremely rare for COVID-19 vaccines. Doctors continue to recommend vaccinations against COVID-19 as the benefits far outweigh the potential risks.

Considering the risk of COVID-19 illness and the possible severe complications such as long-term health problems, hospitalization, and even death, vaccines remain the main and most effective method to protect ourselves and communities from the virus. To access the updated list of vaccination centers, kindly refer to the Ministry of Health’s Facebook page. Also, to find information about the closest vaccination center to you or to ask questions about the vaccines, please call the Ministry of Health’s hotline at 9090.

MEDIUM RISK

RUMOUR #6

VARIANTS

“I heard that the mutated virus Omicron came about because of the people that took the vaccine” Unknown-Facebook

Viruses constantly change through mutations, and sometimes these mutations result in new variants. Omicron is a COVID-19 variant. There are no studies that suggests vaccines are the reason why Omicron came about. There is no active virus in the COVID-19 vaccines, and you cannot get COVID-19 through the vaccine. When you receive the vaccine, your immune system develops antibodies that protects it against COVID-19.

We can protect ourselves from COVID-19 in general, and the Omicron variant, by following the precautions recommended by the World Health Organization, such as physical distancing, washing your hands regularly, wearing face masks when in public and avoiding crowded areas.

We can also tackle the Omicron variant by testing early when feeling any COVID-19 symptoms, and getting vaccinated as it is the best available option to protect ourselves and loved ones. By reducing the number of infections, vaccines decrease the chance of new variants emerging.

If you or your loved ones would like to test for COVID-19, PCR testing is available at a number of Ministry of Health authorized labs. To find the nearest PCR testing lab, please visit the Ministry of Health’s Facebook page for the latest updates. For more information about the Omicron variant please visit: <https://www.who.int/news/item/28-11-2021-update-on-omicron>

MEDIUM RISK

RUMOUR #7

DISEASE SEVERITY

There is no other way around than living with Corona which is not much different from a simple cold if your immunity is strong with an emphasis on protecting people with weak immunity (like those with chronic diseases) with known simple instructions such as wearing a mask sometimes and strengthening their immunity...etc” Man -Facebook

ANSWER

COVID-19 and the common cold sometimes share similar symptoms but are caused by different viruses. A range of viruses can lead to the common cold, including rhinovirus and coronavirus (which is a large family of viruses that can cause illness that range from the common cold to more severe diseases). The coronavirus which causes the common cold should not be confused with SARS-CoV-2, a novel strain of coronavirus that had not been seen before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Common symptoms include a cough, runny nose, fever, sore throat and fatigue. Other COVID-19 symptoms may include nausea, or vomiting, or diarrhea whereas common colds are not associated with these symptoms. Also, COVID-19 symptoms typically appear two to 14 days after exposure to the virus, common cold symptoms appear one to three days after exposure to the virus. COVID-19 is unlikely to make you sneeze, whereas sneezing is a common symptom for colds. COVID-19, unlike the common cold, is more likely to develop into serious health complications such as hospitalization or even death, whereas the common cold is usually harmless and most people recover within three to 10 days.

The best way to know if you have COVID-19 or the common cold is to get tested if you feel any of the prevalent symptoms for COVID-19. If you or your loved ones would like to test for COVID-19, PCR testing is available at Ministry of Health authorized labs. You can find the nearest PCR lab by referring to their official [Facebook page](#). It is also important to follow the preventive measures set by the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization, such as maintaining a physical distance of 1 meter from others when in public or in crowded areas, wearing a face mask, and washing your hands with soap and water.

MEDIUM RISK

RUMOUR #8

REINFECTION

“Can a person infected with Corona get infected directly afterwards from using their personal belongings?” Man - Facebook

ANSWER

People who get infected with COVID-19 develop natural immunity against the virus following their recovery. Up to date, the exact duration of immunity and protection against the virus is unknown, however the World Health Organization suggests that immunity can last between 6 to 8 months.

There are no studies that link reinfection to the use of personal belongings. To protect ourselves and communities, we should follow the preventative measures set by the Ministry of Health, such as maintaining a distance of 1 meter from others when in public or in a crowded place, washing our hands regularly, and wearing a face mask when in public places.

LOW RISK

RUMOUR #9

RELIGION

“The reason for this is because people steered away from Allah, so people [should] get closer to Allah so that he removes this sickness from us.” Man -Facebook

Religion offers people comfort in times of hardships, including the COVID-19 pandemic. Many people seek comfort from their faith and believe that God will protect them from harm if they actively practice their religious duty. Although peoples’ beliefs should be understood and accepted, it is important to emphasize that scientific knowledge is not incompatible with religion and that it is still vitally important for people to take all the necessary steps to protect themselves and our communities.

COVID-19 is a respiratory virus that spreads through the air (aerosol transmission), coughing or sneezing (droplet transmission) and contaminated surfaces (fomite transmission). It can pass between people just from breathing the same air as an infected person in the same room and there is often no way of telling whether someone is infected. It is so small that it is unseen. Faith in God encourages the belief in the unseen and that we have control of our own future if we do the right things.

You can protect yourself by avoiding crowded and unventilated areas where possible, wearing a mask in places where people gather such as mosques, markets and schools, and washing your hands more frequently. If face masks are not available in your area you can use a face covering and continue to stay at a distance of 1 meter from others when in public or in a crowded place.

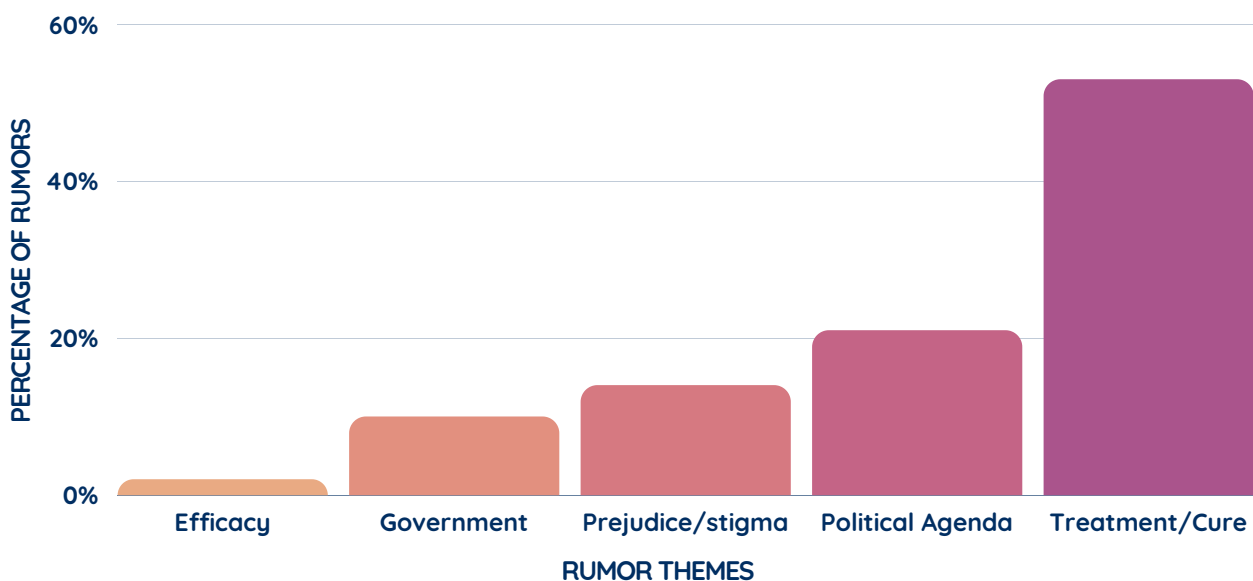
Vaccinations are the best way we can protect ourselves and others from developing severe COVID-19 symptoms, especially for older people and those with chronic health conditions who are more at risk of developing severe COVID-19 symptoms. For more information about COVID-19 vaccines, you can speak to a health care worker by calling the hotline for COVID-19 at 9090.

LOW RISK

ANSWER

TOP RUMOR THEMES

Top 5 rumor themes based on the analysis of 113 rumors collected in Arabic between 17 Jan and 15 Feb 2022





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

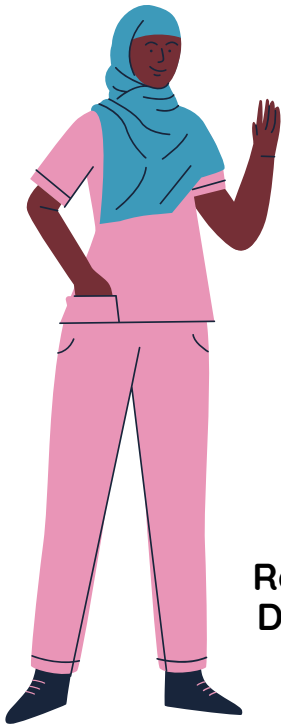


Do you have any symptoms such as fever, cough, or a sore throat?

YES



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



NO



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

NO



Please note if you experience any symptoms such as fever, loss of smell or taste, or shortness of breath, seek testing. Otherwise, follow the preventative measures set by the Ministry of Health

YES



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

NO



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

