Patient Instruction Skills

Teaching Patients About COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

Procedure

PROCEDURE STEPS

1. Develop a comprehensive teaching plan tailored to specific learning needs and divided into segments to avoid overwhelming patient.

2. Provide timely, relevant, individualized education about COVID-19 infection. Use:
   - Simple, nonmedical language all patients can understand
   - High-quality teaching tools that are aligned with learning characteristics and support health literacy
   - Appropriate teaching/learning strategies

3. Explain COVID-19 virus is similar to common cold and describe its transmission, including how it:
   - Spreads via respiratory droplet (cough or sneeze) and during the prodromal (presymptomatic) period
   - Lives on surfaces for hours to days, but it is unclear if the virus can be transmitted this way
   - Has an average incubation period of about 2-14 days
   - May be spread by asymptomatic carriers

4. Describe typical signs/symptoms of COVID-19. Instruct patients to seek emergency care or to contact health care provider immediately if they develop signs of severe COVID-19 infection.

5. Describe diagnostic testing that may be ordered, including reverse transcriptase polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) and types of specimens collected for test, including:
   - Upper respiratory specimens using a nasal and/or oropharyngeal swab
   - Sputum, if productive cough is present
   - Bronchoalveolar samples, if patient is on a ventilator
   - Other tests include blood tests, chest x-ray, or chest CT scan.
6. Explain results are typically available in 4-6 hrs.

7. Instruct patients with suspected exposure to take steps to self-quarantine for 14 days if either of the following criteria are met:¹⁶ ¹⁷

- Recent proximal exposure (6 feet or 2 meters) to someone suspected of or diagnosed with COVID-19, including health care providers
- Return from a country with a level 3 travel advisory

8. Educate patients about how to self-isolate if they are asymptomatic or have mild symptoms and to treat symptoms at home per clinician order. If signs of severe infection develop, instruct to call treating clinician immediately.

9. Instruct patients with suspected or probable infection to isolate until either of the following conditions are met:¹⁸ ¹⁹

- 1-2 Negative RT-PCR test result(s) are returned, depending on clinician order.
- Fever and symptoms have been resolved for at least 72 hours (without medication) and 7 days have passed since symptoms began.

10. Instruct patients with positive infection to isolate until either of the following conditions are met:¹⁸ ¹⁹

- Fever and symptoms have resolved and 2 negative RT-PCR tests taken more than 24 hours apart are returned.
- Fever and symptoms have been resolved for at least 72 hours (without medication) and at least 7 days have passed since symptoms began.

11. Review risk factors for complications of COVID-19 infection.¹ ³ ⁴ ¹⁶ ²⁰ ²¹

12. Explain treatments for COVID-19. At this time, steroid medications, such as prednisone, and NSAIDS, such as ibuprofen, are to be avoided.³ ⁴ ⁶ ¹³ ²² ²³

13. Describe techniques to prevent disease spread to others, including:

- Practicing proper hand hygiene ¹⁶
- Social distancing
- Cough etiquette
- Cleaning/disinfecting the home¹⁵

14. Offer referrals to online counseling therapy or support groups to help manage stress and alleviate anxiety.
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