

On Corona Self Treatment

Hi All,

If you need urgent info on self-care for Corona, please skip my intro and go down immediately to my core messages in capitals near the end.

Otherwise please read on. It will probably get a long text, but I currently have not much energy to rework it to the essence(might do that later) and without context I am also afraid the message will not convince. And this way I can also explain my situation to everybody sending me messages and mails the last days. I will try to share this same message over other channels to reach as many people who may need it, and will also translate it to Dutch soon.

So as some of you already know: yes I indeed got the infamous Corona Virus. Got sick last Friday and got diagnosed with great certainty yesterday by my GP/(family doctor) and again today at UZA(Main Hospital for my region) but this time they were very sure, eventhough they do not test people here (nasal swab etc) that are not critical)) Luckily I am 'only' 33 and (was) in excellent health and stamina. As a reference for people not knowing me: I do a few different sports each week and know my lungs can handle a lot. (still managed to hold my breath 3 minutes a few weeks ago)

My message is not about being careful and whatnot, as many have communicated about that in all different ways for weeks already. And I'm afraid - regardless how it is worded - for a lot of people that message will not register in their brain in time anyway. A lot of time for introspection later. (But in short: if you got ANY symptom like a cough, running nose, fever,... please self-isolate, by the time you are sure it will have spread. This is not (only) about you but mainly for all those around you with less health) And this is also not about statistics. Yes on an individual level you make a good chance while not in a group at risk. But start multiplying the lethal percentage with the amount of people you know that soon can be infected and we get another story.

Anyway So I was not fearful for myself, but still am for a lot of people around me. I will not go too much in detail about the symptoms, and certainly not about the flu-like ones. As I understand they are different in a lot of people based on the way/dose of the contamination. So please do not focus too much on mine, there are good 'guides' elsewhere. And to be

honest: on Friday I also thought I only got a cold or a 'flu' when my throat gradually started to hurt a lot and later that day got muscle pains, a runny nose, a cough and some minor symptoms. , I decided to stay indoors anyway following the warnings. (I have to admit that I had to blow my nose a few times in the week(end) before, and my throat felt a tiny bit sore for about an hour on wednesday but I hope that was totally unrelated.) Hopefully not giving hands the whole week helped and I did not contaminate too many in the days prior. If you are one of them: I am truly sorry.

Saturday morning I woke up with also pain in my chest, that felt 'stinging' when breathing in. And some weird should pain near the joints. But no fever. Sunday morning I woke up with a low fever-like feeling, and measured 37.5°C on my forehead. It developed into a mild fever when I measured again in the early afternoon (But a few hours later that was luckily lower and by 17:00 again measured a normal 36.5°C. The coughing 'urge' and runny nose also go a lot less, so I felt it would be over soon. The pains while breathing where the main complaint left, but did not feel like that much of a deal to me as I solved that by breathing less deep than normal. (got to mainly thank systema for the right skills/experience concerning breathing) I went to sleep and slept quite well(easier when tired). Sunday morning I was happy to notice that I did not need to cough anymore and my nose was totally clear (was already less stuffed the evening before). But the chest pain got worse, feeling like some heavy weight was constantly on my chest, making breathing difficult. If you would consider a normal depth of inhale at rest 50% and a full breath(when healthy, like when you prepare for a dive) 100%, I noticed I was now going from the maybe 45% of yesterday to maybe 30%. Doing a full breath was impossible (maybe until 70%) and quite painful. But that did not seem like a problem, as I felt like I was healing otherwise just fine. I only needed to breath shallower but faster. And no need to do sports now anyway. In the late afternoon I finally got my doctor/GP on the line. (they are working overtime to handle all the calls) I told her I felt ok with staying home but wanted to get her opinion to rule out the flu that is apparently also spreading everywhere here. I explained my symptoms and apparently those of the flu where different and she was 'with a high probability' convinced it was the Corona virus. As I already knew from others she told me there were not enough tests, so no way to know 100%. As expected she asked to stay home in self-quarantine until told otherwise

(at least a week), and the request to call her every 2 days for an update. My self-denial now gone, I uneasily contacted (almost) everybody I got in closer contact with since last Monday. (luckily it is a lot less contagious before you have symptoms) Luckily everybody felt fine, but sadly too soon to rule out. A friend brought me the prescribed Acetylcysteine which should help heal my lungs. I got it delivered safely through the elevator to my floor and managed to not touch anything but the medication by using sticks. Anyway I felt quite fine to notice my fever still did not return, my airways(nose & throat) unobstructed and the main complaint was mostly the chest pain. I went to sleep early but woke up about 6 hours later. I did not feel well and needed to put quite some effort in my breathing. I noticed I only was breathing at maybe 10% now. With this amount of effort I could not go back to sleep so I started e-reading in bed. A recent article got my attention: Apparently many people, including young and previously healthy, were arriving at the ER(intensive care) unable to breathe and on oxygen. I felt concerned this was related to what I was developing. There where picture of x-rays showing those patients had about 20-50% fluid in their lungs. Having no experience with it, I started researching about pneumonia(before that point I equaled that to a synonym of an extremely strong cough) . The symptoms appeared to be similar to what I experienced, but I did not have the cough (nor fever) so was not convinced that was the issue is was dealing with. Until I read about a version without a cough that was somehow more dangerous.(sorry currently forgot the medical name) So it hit me: the cause of my trouble breathing was maybe indeed fluids in my lungs. As I could not sleep anyway I kept reading more while my breathing got even more difficult. Apparently they 'solve' this in the hospital with a well-aimed syringe through the lungs to drain them. (not to be confused with the one for water buildup on the outside of your lungs) Although I have a syringe in my first-aid kit, that was not really the solution I was hoping for. So I started looking for other solutions while researching how people that have chronical pneumonia deal with those fluids. Finally I found some good advice aimed for people with COPD(and similar symptoms). I read many articles, like this one: <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-topics/za1357> As my breathing go even shallower as time passed , I tried the part about inducing coughing, but it was not very successful and hurt very bad. However the part about Postural drainage seemed logical and just what I needed . So I started doing that and soon felt my throat filling up making

me need to swallow the slime a few times. When tapping my chest I finally also started to cough up some slime. I noticed more came down when on my right side (maybe because more was in my left lung) and soon I went even more extreme, dangling over the corner of my bed, with my hips on the bedside and my face on some clothing on the ground. I was doing almost everything I read at the same time: breathing out double as long as in, tapping/hitting myself on my chest and back and suddenly so much slime came out I needed to stop as my throat and nose got blocked by it and my dressing gown was already so full I started to spill on my floor. So I got a bucket of which I soon had the bottom filled. Not ideal, as breathing in a bucket was difficult. While walking around looking for something else I already felt my breathing got a lot better; From maybe 5-10% to 30% now. So I started doing this again above a big tray with a towel on the side. A few minutes each time, as it was difficult doing it longer. (logical with the blood also running to my head) In-between I kept coughing up slime the old-fashioned way. (all the slime was luckily clear/transparent btw, so did not look that nasty as in the image you may now. And for me good to see there was no bacterial coinfection) When my breathing got back to about 35% I stopped and I finally fell asleep. After waking up around 10:00 my breathing was less good again, so I did the exercise again and when I felt I hit 40% I happily called my doctor to inform her of the good news I found a solution for the breathing problems. She was surprised and apparently almost shocked to hear my conclusions. I did(and do) not totally understand why she thinks most people could not do the procedure I just described. Yes it is not pleasant and hurt while doing it, but not being able to breath was more uncomfortable and pain is not something to avoid when you know it is needed. She told me she would call me back. I rested a bit and about an hour later right after I did some 'fluid exercises' again my GP called me back. Apparently she discussed my case with doctors from UZA. They were apparently very concerned and wanted to check me urgently. I was surprised as I had already heard they were overwhelmed and still without enough tests. I also was reluctant to break my quarantine and a little wary to also catch something else there (like that common flu or a bacteria) my lungs are not ready for.

I was requested to call the doctor there directly. When looking for arguments to convince them I was not in direct danger, I remembered I had a Samsung S7 with a SpO2 sensor to measure oxygen saturation which I used 2 years ago in the Himalaya's to check how well I dealt with high

altitudes. I remember I had values in the upper 90's even at above 5500 meters as long as I maintained good breathing (faster deep breaths, burst-breathing etc). And when home I used to have a value of 100 (sometimes 99). So I measured that first and got an 88 and after extra breathing got it to 98 so that seemed very good comparatively.

I called UZA and spoke to the doctor. He convinced(almost begged me as I was reluctant) to come over, even when I told him I already felt a lot better at that moment. He also assured me I could go back home after if I wanted and that they really wanted to do the necessary tests(X-ray etc). So I hoped they expected something useful from it and maybe were interested in talking about the postural drainage so they can help others, or suggest similar things . And in case they got resupplied with plenty of test-kits and they would finally do the 'real' corona test, I was already looking forward to be certain of immunity against corona after I get better. After taking a short rest (the phone calls took quite some energy), I left in gloves and with my mouth covered to my car. (spraying everything with cleaning agent behind me) I arrived at UZA and after a phone call to find out where I was expected I went inside. After presenting my ID, asking quick yes/no questions, making sure I cleaned my gloves and got a mouth mask they let me wait in a room after .

I can not say how long I waited there, but I kept breathing in the meantime as much as I could through the mouth mask which felt like a task on its own. So far for the 'somebody is waiting for you' procedure When they finally called me in, they asked me to describe my symptoms while they measured my vital signs. I went quickly(or at least as fast as my breathing allowed) over everything and they told me : yes this is certainly Corona. They were concerned about my lungs but confirmed my oxygen saturation was good. So far no surprises. But then they suddenly said(accompanied with the typical quarantine talk): you can go home now. And I thought this was the intake talk before the tests that they wanted to do? So I asked and mentioned the postural lung drainage, hoping they would confirm they would tell others. But she only said something like: 'we are happy it helps and that you can take care of yourself, keep doing it' and ended the conversation with some nonsense painkiller talk. (she kept recommending dafalgan/paracetamol, while I told here before I am not interested at all in only removing symptoms and pain if they do not help to remove the cause.) Confused I went to my car and called back to my doctor (could not use my phone inside with the medical gloves). She was shocked to hear

this development and asked me to wait in the parking lot until she called back. Some time later she called back and deeply apologised: Apparently talked to the doctor we spoke to earlier and he also was surprised. But when he in turn spoke to the urgent care doctors that “helped me” earlier they simply told him they agreed with everything he said and understood the need to do more tests, but were way too busy to even do an X-ray which had a waiting list on its own. And as they had no doubt about the diagnosis they did not feel it was that urgent/important to confirm that through tests. So after he also apologised for the situation I was asked to go back home in quarantine and call 2 times a day. If my SpO2 would drop I would need to come back urgently. So I got home after being at UZA for about 3 hours and feel it is important to share this with you all to start up the debate on self-care advise. (instead of only : stay home with painkillers and quarantine)

But first I went to sleep as I was too tired to write. I woke up only once, did the drainage (now with a lot less slimes coming down compared to the start) and felt back asleep. I am ashamed to see I slept that long as it already morning now when typing this.

It is difficult to say how common my Corona progress and experience is. There is a chance it develops differently in other people and I hear a lot of people do not even get pneumonia. Lucky for them. However I have a gut feeling that a lot of the people that get into a critical state got there because they reached a point where they could not breath unaided caused by the fluids in their lungs. They maybe first also felt better as I did, but quite a short time later suddenly feeling like every breath could be the last.

Unaware of what was happening inside them. Yes this is a gut feeling, based on various things I have recently read in reports from the WHO and institutes like Johns Hopkins but yes I am not a medical professional. But even if my case is not that common, it can not do damage to spread awareness. If people that got infected start doing the right exercises on time before they cannot do anything anymore, I think many more can sustain/survive (at least longer) at home without needing an oxygen mask and breathing machines, aided by needles to the lungs.

I would have like to get this advice sooner myself anyway. In no way am I claiming I would have died without it and whether ER would have been unavoidable otherwise. My infection might as well get worse again anyway(I expect/hope not). And maybe the acetylcysteine helped me with getting the slime out too. I don't know. But I know I was a lot more healthy

then many others and my lungs were in excellent shape until last week. So I would rather not think about smokers, mucopolysaccharide patients, elderly... having to endure this without help or advice.

Anyway :

MY MESSAGE TO EVERYBODY SUFFERING CORONA: Be calm and know the chance for survival is high. But do not expect the doctor will treat yourself before you get critical. They are overwhelmed and used to following strict medical procedures focussing on medication and treatment by professionals only. As this virus is new, they don't have any procedure ready, expect for diagnosis. Of course they will probably prescribe anti-symptom medications for pain relief and to stop you from complaining (which will probably indeed ease the pain but may also be bad for you in the long run). In my view, no doctor (that I know) will want to risk their reputation by suggesting publicly to try something that is only an assumption at this point and not proven scientifically. (easier to ask NOT to do something) In normal times that is the right way. I also have no statistic at hand how common my symptoms are and hope many can get corona without a (similar) pneumonia

HOWEVER: Be aware that fluids may be filling your lungs, possibly limiting your breath soon. And know it does not feel that painful and concerning at the start, certainly while you are focussed on other symptoms. But it is probably not the running nose, the headache or the cough itself that will kill you. Your body's immune system can develop a cure for this virus if you give it enough time. So please do not spend this time on a respirator inside the hospital but a lot more comfortable at home. Your immune system works a lot better when you can treat your body well.

THE PROPOSED ROUTINE TO GET RID OF EXCESS LUNG FLUIDS : I am convinced it cannot damage you to try the following carefully and progressively (assuming you have some common sense), even before clear signs of pneumonia:

Have some towel, or similar close to your head. Or if you are lucky or followed the hype, you can use toilet paper, which you can also safely flush in the toilet without creating a biohazard for the cleaners. A big tray is ideal as you can flush the contents down the toilet too when done.

Put some pillows under your hips. Make sure your chest is lower than your hips and your head is the lowest point. So put your lungs as vertical as is still comfortable. If you do this exercise in time, you can do this progressively without having to go to the extreme (fast). Slowly inhale

through your nose and exhale through your mouth with abdominal breathing. Each exhale should take about twice as long as the inhale. Gravity may already start draining fluids from your lungs slowly after 1 or 2 minutes. You can help the process by tapping of the chest and back (not on spine) and if possible without sharp pain you can cough up more (two coughs shortly after each other seemed effective). Once the fluids (sounds better than slime) are inside your mouth you can swallow them in or spit/gurgle them out. If they get in your nose just blow your nose. And off course support your head with your arms so you do not fall over, certainly when going (almost) vertical. Do the same for each side (not each lung is affected the same), on your back and on your stomach. Repeat until the 'flow' stops or you need rest.

You will feel for yourself what approach is the most effective to you. It is possible I could feel the slime coming down sooner than others as my nose and throat are clear before starting, making the difference very noticeable. Be conscious of your breathing and when you feel the effort gets greater again, please do the exercise again. If you have no problems breathing and this has no effect then you can maybe consider this good news, confirming your lungs are fine. This method did not remove all pain (certainly not the stinging pain while breathing in), but it allows me to breath in almost normally now. And I have good hope it can help you through until your body has set up a defence system on its own for the previously unknown virus. Rest assured it can do that much quicker than any doctor can develop a vaccine. For those fine with waiting until critical: Maybe by that time there is no place for you anymore in the ER. And if they give you priority, I hope you understand that means somebody else (older?) got denied help because of you. If you still don't care, consider that the chance of getting a secondary infection in the hospital is much bigger, certainly now with all the improvisation going on.

Yes, you can still call your doctor (and should when in need, unless for minor symptoms), but keep in mind they are already working overtime. I hope this reaches and helps many people, or at least starts a healthy debate on self-care. Hopefully it can avoid the need for many to go into intensive-care, saving those already on respiratory support that cannot help themselves.

Take care and I hope to see you all back in good health in a few weeks or months.

Jeroen (March 18)