

Steve (00:00):

And one of the keys to coping with COVID-19 is, well, it makes a lot of sense, doesn't it? To be as healthy as possible. Doctors are looking for a vaccine, but while they're doing that, there's a sensible call for us to all have a balanced lifestyle. Well, let's talk to cardiologist, Dr. Aseem Malhotra - good to see you this morning Aseem. I mean, we know obviously that people most at-risk have got compromised immune systems. What do we therefore do to boost to bolster our immune systems?

Dr. Malhotra (00:32):

I think the first thing to say before we talk about that, I think it's really important as you've continuously reiterated on sky news. People must, must maintain social distancing. So that means I think we all have to behave like we've got the virus, whether we're asymptomatic, or we've got some symptoms - and keep away from people as much as possible.

Dr. Malhotra (00:50):

If you have to go out and talk about that. And maintain a 2 meter distance from the person that you're with. Now, the elephant in the room, Steve, and all of this which hasn't been discussed so far, is the people who are most vulnerable to severe complications from this virus have chronic metabolic disease. So I've looked at this data quite extensively. If you look at Italy, the average age of death, of course it was older population, 81, they have the oldest population in New York. Yes. But they, the average person who died had at least 3.7 chronic conditions. including high blood pressure, type two diabetes, smoking and cancer. And in Wu Han more than 60% of the people who suffered major complications. Tragically, many of these people died -had type two diabetes or high blood pressure. Now the reason I talk about the elephant in the room, Steve is that the general health, unfortunately of the British American and many European people is dire.

Dr. Malhotra (01:45):

We have six out of 10 adults overweight or obese in this country, similar in America. Only 17.4% of people in the United States are metabolically healthy. Now, why is that? Well, if you have high blood pressure, if you're pre-diabetic or type two diabetic and you have a dysregulated immune system, your white cells are not functioning optimally. The same applies to people who are overweight or obese as well. We know people who have obesity suffer far more complications from influenza. So I think this is a really important point - what message do people need to get across? Now, it's not all doom and gloom because as you started, you know, in the intro you said that we can do things from a lifestyle perspective. Well, lifestyle changes, Steve can actually have an impact on people's health within weeks or months. We know type two diabetes, for example, can be put into remission in up to 50% of cases within months of changing lifestyle.

Dr. Malhotra (02:36):

So all these things need to be thought about. And now what? What would I advise? What am I advising my patients? What I'm advising the public to do about this? Well, first and foremost, problem with obesity and excess body fat is really related to ultra-processed food. Half of the diet in Britain is ultra-processed food. We need to curb that considerably. A lot of people are going to be at home. Now. This is a great opportunity to think spending more time cooking nutritious suits. Think about what you eat is going to impact your immune system and the likelihood Steve is that we are probably all at some point going to get this virus. The question is, are we going to have mild symptoms or more severe symptoms? If we look after our health, probably now we can protect ourselves from severe illness. So eating

nutritious whole foods, cutting the ultra processed foods or snacks or crisps, the chocolates, all that to a bare minimum, I think we can do that.

Dr. Malhotra ([03:25](#)):

We're already on a good way to better health. Being active. Now a lot of people are gonna have to stay at home - I understand that. #CROSSFIT health have a free website [ <https://www.crossfit.com/health> ] where people can go online and look at home exercises. Physical activity is a major problem. William Bird, there's an article today in the Sunday Express a new story. William Byrd, who's an adviser to the world health organization of physical and activities estimated that just from three months of being inactive, an extra three month in addition to the inactivity we already had - could result in an extra 7,000 deaths in the next one year in the UK. So what can we do about that? Simple things. I'm going out for brisk walks for 10 minutes couple of times a day can boost the immune system. Really important. Some strength training at home. You can do home exercises.

Dr. Malhotra ([04:12](#)):

So I really stress that. Very importantly, the other thing is sleep. We need to try and ensure, and I know it's difficult. People are very stressed right now. We need to try and ensure that we can get at least seven to eight hours of sleep. Now one quick anecdote. Many years ago, working as a junior doctor working very busy shifts. I suffered the worst bout of Flu I can ever imagine. And what I think leading up to that was three things. One is I was very stressed. I wasn't sleeping, I was snacking on junk foods. And then to make the situation worse. I then "over-trained" - I "over-exercised" - I ran for an hour at high intensity. Actually what many people don't realize, if you over-exercise, you do too much - It depresses the immune system for at least 24 hours. So let's just think about this carefully. And of course, let's do what we can to reduce our stress levels.

Dr. Malhotra ([04:56](#)):

It means connecting with family members, even if it's via Skype or on the phone, doing things that we can try and enjoy doing in the household, but also getting out and getting some fresh air. If we do all of Steve, it's not just an opportunity for us to help save many lives from the Corona Virus, but moving forward, we will get through this. We will get through this. Our health system will be in a much better place in a year or two from now because: one of the reasons we're not coping with this crisis, is because of these chronic metabolic diseases related to lifestyle. Over the last couple of decades have increased so much - have meant that our healthcare systems were already overstretched. We've now got the Coronavirus involved. This is a complete public health crisis as you know.

Steve ([05:39](#)):

To be honest, a lot of that sounds like common sense, you know, eating more fruit and veggies, you know, cooking stuff from scratch.

Dr. Malhotra ([05:47](#)):

And as you say, a lot of people are going to have more time to do that now. So it's a good time to be getting into that habit. But you started off talking about "metabolic health" and poor rates of "metabolic health". What does that actually mean?

Dr. Malhotra ([06:00](#)):

Well, metabolic health essentially Steve, in simple terms is basically diet/lifestyle things that we do as part of our lifestyle that have adverse effect on conditions related to excess body fat. So high blood pressure, probably about 50% of high blood pressure is related to excess body fat. Type two diabetes is a conditioners, you know, I would call it "ultra-processed food disease" really too many refined carbohydrates and sugar in particular - and unhealthy fats [Factory made "Vegetable" Oils]. These contributes to that. And of course, heart disease, cardiovascular disease, which is obviously my area of expertise is related to these conditions or risk factors.

Dr. Malhotra ([06:36](#)):

And smoking, let's not forget smoking. There's still a relatively high prevalence of smoking - it's come down dramatically in this country over the last few decades. But if you smoke, then you're much more likely to have complications from respiratory viruses. So this is the best time, the best time ever, there's no better time than now to stop smoking as well. So if you combine all these conditions with obesity, then these are what we call the "chronic metabolic diseases". [All these diseases relating to Insulin Resistance and Hyperinsulinemia]. And also, I know it's, you know, a lot of people can't do much about this now, but moving forward, we think there is a very strong evidence to suggest that these chronic conditions relate to, you know, poor diet/lifestyle choices - also are a big contributing factor to development of cancer too.

Steve ([07:17](#)):

Okay. I see. As always, good to talk to you. Thank you. Thank you.