

Can mouthwash prevent COVID-19 and other respiratory diseases?

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In the context that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to spread strongly, people have sought ways to prevent disease for themselves and their families. From disinfecting homes with UV light, disinfecting hair dryers, spraying alcohol on the body and eating garlic . there are many misleading tips about the corona virus that have been rejected by the World Health Organization (WHO).

But what about gargling? Will it help you prevent new corona virus? What logic is based on gargling? Is there any medical evidence to show whether mouthwash is effective against COVID-19 and other respiratory diseases?



Up to this point, it must be affirmed that no large, randomized, large-scale trial has confirmed the effectiveness of gargling with salt water, vinegar or any solution. What else is it to prevent upper and lower respiratory infections from coronavirus or any viruses or bacteria?

This means that we do not have scientific evidence and gold standards to confirm the effectiveness of this method.

Only a few small-scale studies show that mouthwash can kill bacteria. But its effectiveness in prevention and treatment has not been proven in rigorous trials.

Despite the lack of evidence, mouthwash is still a common hygiene measure in many countries. In East Asia, especially Japan, gargling is strongly encouraged by the government, along with other hygiene measures such as hand-washing, wearing masks and keeping social distance during the cold and regular flu seasons.

Despite this, health experts say not everyone should gargle, such as patients with neck problems, strokes, dementia and children under 8.

The prevalence of mouthwash in Japan has explained why most of the studies proving its effects on upper and lower respiratory diseases are carried out by scientists in this country. In particular, the most attractive findings include the effects of mouthwash solution without prescription povidone-iodine.



Povidone-iodine has been used by Japanese people for decades to treat sore throats. In a small pilot study conducted in the country in 2002, 23 patients with chronic respiratory disease were asked to rinse 4 or more times daily with povidone-iodine solution.

The researchers found that compared to the time before they practiced this hygiene measure, rinsing their mouths regularly for several months to two years with povidone-iodine solution helped reduce the incidence of respiratory infections by about 50%.

Gargle with povidone-iodine solution helps reduce infections due to a number of quite toxic bacteria including Pseudomonas, Staph (including MRSA) and Haemophilus.

Laboratory studies also show potential benefits from gargling. However, it should be noted that laboratory research is not always able to demonstrate results in real patients.

A recent German laboratory study claims that mouthwash containing povidone-iodine can eliminate more than 99% of the corona virus causing SARS and MERS (a close relative of the current Covid-19). However, it is worth mentioning that it is sponsored by a mouthwash manufacturer.

A previous Japanese laboratory study revealed that mouthwash products containing povidone-iodine outperformed other common antiseptic mouthwash products containing chlorhexidine gluconate and benzalkonium chloride, in disabling many common viruses such as coxsackie, rhovovirus, adenovirus, rotavirus, influenza.

However, human studies are needed to confirm whether mouthwash is effective for patients or not.



An important note is that in many countries like the United States, you can't find povidone-iodine mouthwash. Most of it is only produced as a skin antiseptic, and if you take it to gargle can be seriously damaging.

Therefore, in the context of unconfirmed news now, it is important that people do not rinse their mouth with povidone-iodine antiseptic skin and all other products are not produced in water. washing mouth.

In Canada, a povidone-iodine mouthwash is sold under the name Betadine. However, some people have reported an allergy to iodine and iodine can cause problems in patients with thyroid disease who are also not recommended to use this type of mouthwash.

For other povidone-iodine-free mouthwashes, there is little evidence that they have significant antibacterial benefits.

For example, Listerine mouthwash has been shown to have antiviral activity in in vitro studies. Some viral strains exposed to mouthwash have been inactivated for 30 seconds, although these studies have not tested it on corona viruses.

A recent clinical study conducted in the UK with the participation of 66 patients showed that: Using the saline solution to wash your nose and mouthwash can also significantly reduce the incidence of flu and colds. . In fact, some common colds are caused by coronavirus, although they are much less dangerous corona strains than SARS-CoV-2 in circulation.

Gargle is considered to be a more simple hygiene practice than nasal washing, because nasal wash requires the use of a sterile bottle to pump the solution through your sinus area.

In the UK study, the brine solution was made in a formula of one teaspoon of salt and one cup of water, giving a solution of approximately 3% concentration. And the participants rinsed their mouths 6 times a day.

Another laboratory study by the British team also discovered a potential mechanism of action of the brine solution. Accordingly, cells in the throat after gargle loaded with chlorine from the salt solution to create a compound with antiviral properties.

A number of other small studies have suggested green tea water or a solution containing catechins, active ingredients of green tea or apple cider vinegar have anti-viral effects. However, these studies have only been performed in the lab, so it is unclear whether it has a real effect on patients.

And of course, it should be recalled that no studies have demonstrated the effect of these mouthwashes on the currently circulating SARS-CoV-2 strain.

One study even suggested that rinsing with regular water may also be helpful in reducing the incidence of upper respiratory tract infection, although a later study did not repeat that result.



In short, when choosing whether or not to rinse your mouth, you need to consider its benefits and risks. The biggest risk is that you use disinfectant povidone-iodine products, and they are really dangerous.

Patients with neck problems, strokes, dementia and children under 8 may also choke and swallow mouthwash. In addition, regular mouthwash may offer some benefits in reducing the risk of upper and lower respiratory tract infections, although its effect on SARS-CoV-2 virus has not been confirmed.

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