I am

ALIVE &
IN COLOR

WINNING THE BATTLE
AGAINST COVID-19

FACT vs. FICTION

COVID-19 Conspiracy Theories & Misinformation

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The COVID-19 Infodemic

The Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is the first pandemic in history in which technology and social media are being used on a massive scale to keep people safe, informed, productive and connected. At the same time, the technology we rely on to keep connected and informed is enabling and amplifying an infodemic that continues to undermine response and relief efforts - jeopardizing even our best efforts to control the pandemic.

What is an infodemic - An infodemic is an overabundance of information, both online and offline that includes deliberate attempts to disseminate wrong information to undermine the public health response and advance alternative agendas of groups or individuals. Mis- and disinformation can be harmful to people's physical and mental health; increase stigmatization; threaten precious health gains; and lead to poor observance of public health measures, thus reducing their effectiveness and endangering countries' ability to stop the pandemic.

Misinformation costs lives - Without the appropriate trust and correct information, simple, life-saving behaviors are overlooked, diagnostic tests go unused, immunization campaigns (or campaigns to promote effective vaccines) will not meet their targets, and the virus will continue to thrive while we struggle to stay alive.
Furthermore, disinformation is:
- Polarizing public debate on topics related to COVID-19;
- Amplifying hate speech;
- Heightening the risk of conflict, violence and human rights violations

A consistent distrust for authority, decentralization of information and a lack of understanding how the virus impacts the population drives fear, skepticism and sometimes, an attitude of outright rejection about the dangers of COVID-19 that spread as fast as the virus. It is undermining government response efforts and causing people to not adopt healthy preventative behaviors that mitigate the pandemic.

Combat Disinformation/Misinformation on Social Media

Common myths spread by social media include:
- People under the age of 65 are immune to The Coronavirus. If they DO catch it, their cases are mild.
- 5G is causing the Coronavirus.
- The Pandemic was planned by powerful people Bill Gates. It's a cover for a plan to implant trackable Microchips.
- COVID-19 restrictions are a method used by the government to control and manipulate its citizens
- We should try to achieve herd immunity by letting the virus spread through the population.

To combat misinformation/disinformation, the general public must verify all information they receive before sharing with others:
- Is the information provided by one of the verified sources above?

- Does it include links or references to official sources e.g. government agency, medical institution, university, health care professional
- Is the author a reputable professional affiliated with a credible organization

Trusted Information Sources

Black and Hispanic communities don't necessarily trust the federal government. Most information is disseminated in Black and Hispanic communities through friends and family. Therefore, it is important to expand information sources to include local sources that they find trustworthy- health institutions, civil organizations, health practitioners and news outlets.

Encourage them to not automatically trust information they see on the internet or social media without checking that it came from a credible source such as the ones below. If someone they know shares false or wrong information, correct them with factual information and add links to credible sources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

National Institutes of Health

Fulton County COVID-19 Information Hub

Georgia Department of Public Health

John Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center

National Public Radio

Atlanta Journal Constitution

Being Black as a Precondition

There is **evidence that Black and Hispanic populations** are being disproportionately affected by COVID-19. While many are engaging in 'victim-blaming' we know that the reality is that a longstanding history of social inequity is the real culprit. Communities of color are at an increased risk of getting sick and dying from COVID-19 due to many reasons related to systemic racism and the social determinants of health such as:

- Discrimination and bias in the health system and by individual practitioners,
- Limited access to care
- Greater risk of exposure due to essential worker occupations and commutes on public transit
- Insecure housing / densely populated living conditions
- Location in food deserts

Inequities such as these are resulting in poor health outcomes and high incidence of pre-conditions. A precondition is an underlying medical condition that increases risk of infection and severe illness from COVID-19. Obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, asthma, high blood pressure and cancer are all pre-conditions that have a higher incidence in communities of color.

- Approximately 4 out of 5 Black Women are overweight or obese
- They are 3.4x more likely to die from their infections
- 10% of Black People in America have Asthma
- African-Americans in Georgia are 3x more likely to be hospitalized from asthma and 4x more likely to visit the ER in the state of GA

Smoking and substance abuse can also weaken the lungs and immune system, making one more likely to get infected with COVID-19 or get more severely ill. The disease progression in those who have the virus and currently smoke or previously smoked is nearly double that of nonsmokers.

Getting tested promptly, seeking treatment early and following important home care and quarantine steps can help to shorten the course of illness.

Adopt Preventative Measures to Protect Yourself and Others

Georgia has the highest rates of COVID-related hospitalizations in the country, Black and Latinx communities are the most affected. It is important to spread the word about effective ways to reduce infection risk and where to get daily living assistance.

Public health officials recommend the 3 Ws:
- Wear a face covering.
- Wash your hands often (for at least 20 seconds) or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Don't touch your face or mask until you're able to clean your hands.
- Wait at least 6 feet from any person not from your household, and a greater distance if the person is not wearing a mask (social distancing);

Avoid Large Gatherings & Be Conscious of The Risk
Follow county and state guidelines for group gatherings. Indoor gatherings put you at a much greater risk of getting a COVID-19 infection.
- Fulton County: COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions
- State of Georgia: CDC COVID-19 Guidance
- Consult the MyCOVID Risk app to assess the risk of attending specific events

Get A Flu Shot
- Getting a Flu shot protects both you and vulnerable populations from catching the flu during the 2020-2021 season.
    - Any reduction in flu cases and their severity could make a difference for hospital capacity, reducing the strain on healthcare systems responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.
    - The more people in all age groups get a flu vaccine, the more protected vulnerable populations (elderly and those with underlying conditions) will be
    - The vaccine might not prevent you from getting the flu but it may make the illness less serious should you get infected.
    - The vaccine could prevent you from having COVID-19 and the flu at the same time

- - Limited Resources: there is a testing capacity and potential shortages in the substances, called reagents, could occur when needed to run the tests

- Affordable, annual flu shots are available on a walk-in basis to Fulton County residents at select sites and County health departments
  - Locations include: Adamsville Regional Health Center, Center for Health and Rehabilitation, College Park (Willie J. Freeman) Regional Health Center, Neighborhood Union Health Center, North Fulton Regional Health Center, Oak Hill Child Adolescent and Family Center).
  - Flu shots will soon be available at select CORE + Fulton Co. BoH COVID-19 testing locations

Vaccines: What You Need to Know

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19, but it is critical that communities of color participate in clinical trials, and also be open to vaccination by a trusted medical professional. For the coronavirus vaccine in particular, the National Institutes of Health has suggested minorities should be overrepresented in testing — perhaps at rates that are double their percentage of the U.S. population.

Purpose of Vaccines

The ideal vaccine controls the spread of a virus
- Nearly 200 million cases of polio, measles, mumps, rubella, varicella, adenovirus, rabies and hepatitis A -- and approximately 450,000 deaths from these diseases -- were prevented in the US alone between 1963 and 2015 by vaccination

Vaccine Regulation and Availability

The CDC Director says it is estimated that a COVID-19 vaccine will be available to the public summer 2021. Until then, the CDC recommends the public proceed with mitigating risk by wearing a mask, keeping socially distant and washing your hands when available.

- Once the vaccine is available, distribution will expand its access to the larger population. The goal of the vaccine is to provide widespread access to vaccination & achieve coverage across the US population and ensure high uptake in target populations who are at high risk for severe outcomes from COVID-19.
- The process for distributing the vaccine will be adjusted based on experience from COVID-19, real time data on the virus and its impact on populations, performance and the ongoing needs of the essential workforce.

The Food and Drug Administration is responsible for regulating, approving the vaccine and its production. The approval process consists of safeguards that make up a multi-step process and involve several oversight committees. Trusted medical experts and practitioners from communities of color are heavily

involved in the oversight of vaccine development for the Coronavirus. These include institutions & Initiatives such as:

- The COVID-19 Prevention Network
- The Community Engagement Alliance Against COVID-19 Disparities (CEAL)
- National COVID-19 Resiliency Network (Morehouse School of Medicine in Partnership with the Department of Health & Human Services)