

Coronavirus intensive care what is involved?

AFP | Paris

The coronavirus pandemic has caused many thousands of people, including Britain's prime minister, to need treatment in intensive

care units, where severe cases of COVID-19 often receive breathing support.

Boris Johnson was moved into intensive care when his condition worsened on Monday, 10 days after diagnosis -- a

typical progression as the virus begins to attack the lungs, reducing the amount of oxygen going to the body and its vital organs.

Failure to at least halt COVID-19 will lead to organ failure

and death but keep the patient alive long enough, and they stand a chance of overcoming it and pulling through.

Here is a summary of what is involved in intensive care treatment:

Q: Who ends up in intensive care?

Life support is reserved for patients suffering from severe respiratory failure resulting from the lungs being affected by the virus.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimated at the end of February that in China some 20 per cent of infections resulted in severe cases -- 6.1 pc who were critical, as well as 13.8 percent deemed severe.

Admission depends on the seriousness of the symptoms -- as well as the availability of beds.



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So far in countries that have had outbreaks, figures show that the vast majority of serious cases are in men.

British data from 2,621 patient admissions to intensive care up to April 3, showed that 73 pc were men, with an average age of 60.

"It is becoming increasingly recognised that there are substantial differences in the im-

mune system between males and females and that these have significant impact on outcome from a wide range of infectious diseases," said Philip Goulder, Professor of Immunology in the Department of Paediatrics at the University of Oxford.

He said lifestyle and social factors could also be involved, including smoking "which affect the level of pre-existing disease such as heart disease, chronic lung disease and cancer."

Q: What is involved in looking after intensive care COVID-19 patients?

The guiding principle of intensive care is to help patients whose vital organs -- heart, lungs, kidneys -- are at risk and need immediate and constant help.

In COVID-19 cases, it is the lungs which come under attack, with patients struggling to get enough oxygen, often deteriorating very quickly as a result.

This deterioration "can happen very quickly between the eighth and tenth day of the illness, often in the space of just



A nurse tends to an intubated and sedated patient infected with COVID-19 at the intensive care unit of the Peupliers private hospital in Paris

a few hours," Dr Albrice Levrat, head of intensive care in the eastern French city of Nancy, explained to Le Point weekly.

In the first instance, the patient is given oxygen through tubes to the nose, progressing to a pressurised full face mask.

If that does not work, then medical staff with turn to mechanical ventilation, which requires the patient to be sedated heavily.

A tube is then inserted through the trachea to carry

oxygen directly into the lungs as a machine effectively takes over the patient's breathing.

Intubation is a major medical procedure which can last for several weeks, requiring an entire medical team to monitor and adjust as required until the patient can breath on their own again unaided.

Some doctors have resorted to a new technique: they artificially oxygenate blood by extracting it with a machine and then returning it into the body.

Q: What is the prognosis for intensive care patients?

Despite the heroic efforts of medical staff, the figures for COVID-19 survival and recovery in intensive care, especially when it proceeds to mechanical ventilation, make for grim reading.

British statistics suggest that perhaps half of all patients going into intensive care die, especially if they are elderly and have other underlying conditions.



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For example, among those patients aged 70 or over, the figures showed more than 68 percent died; for the 50-69 age bracket it was nearly 46 percent but fell to more than 23 pc for the 16-49 group.

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'Obesity is major COVID-19 risk factor'

Reuters | Paris

Being overweight is a major risk for people infected with the new coronavirus and the United States is particularly vulnerable because of high obesity levels there, France's chief epidemiologist said on Wednesday.

Professor Jean-François Delfraissy, who heads the scientific council that advises the government on the epidemic, said as many as 17 million of France's 67 m citizens were seriously at risk from the coronavirus because of age, pre-existing illness or obesity.

"This virus is terrible, it can hit young people, in particular obese young people. Those who are overweight really need to be careful," Delfraissy told francinfo radio.

"That is why we're worried about our friends in America, where the problem of obesity is well known and where they will probably have the most problems because of obesity."



French immunologist Jean-François Delfraissy

Delfraissy said 88 per cent of those infected with the coronavirus suffered only severe flu-like symptoms.

The mortality rate for young people entering hospital with severe COVID-19 respiratory disease was about 2pc, he said, but that rose to 14pc for people who

are more fragile.

Despite the rapid spread of the virus in France, the country is still far from getting to the point where 50pc to 60pc of the population has been infected and recovered and at which point a certain level of "herd immunity" is reached, Delfraissy said.

"Initial data show that the number of people who may have developed immunity is lower than we imagined, about 10-15pc," said the veteran infectious diseases specialist who has led French research into Ebola and AIDS.

He said it was too soon to end France's lockdown, which started March 17 and is set to last until at least April 15.

The council's recommendation was for strict confinement to continue several weeks from now and that before the lockdown could be unwound, pressure on intensive care units (ICU) needed to ease and the

spread of the virus slow.

On Tuesday, the number of COVID-19 patients in ICU rose by just 59 (1pc) to 7,131 but the number of confirmed and probable cases reported nationally jumped by a record 11,059 or 11pc to 109,069 as more and more nursing homes declared cumulative data for the first time.

A third condition for ending the lockdown was having sufficient stocks of equipment, Delfraissy said, notably masks, testing kits and tools for tracing infected patients.

French coronavirus testing capacity has risen from 3,000 per day in mid-March to 30,000 on a daily basis now, and will rise to 100,000-250,000 per day in about two weeks, he said.

Obesity has been cited as a possible explanation for higher than average per-capita COVID-19 death rates in the US city of New Orleans and in Mexico.

Latest developments



Courtesy of The Print

● **India gets first drive-through coronavirus tests.** India's first drive-through testing centre has opened in New Delhi, requiring a doctor's prescription and costing roughly \$60. India has so far recorded over 5,000 coronavirus cases, but since it has so far carried out little testing among the 1.3 billion population, experts caution the real number is likely to be far higher.



● **A three-man space crew finished preparations on Wednesday for a mission to the International Space Station, which is going ahead despite the coronavirus pandemic.**

Anatoly Ivanishin and Ivan Vagner of Russia's Roscosmos space agency and NASA's Chris Cassidy will blast off from Kazakhstan for a six-month mission at 08:05 GMT today.

● **US Acting Navy Secretary Thomas Modly resigned Tuesday over his mishandling of an outbreak of the coronavirus on the USS Theodore Roosevelt aircraft carrier, Defense Secretary Mark Esper announced.**



Modly sparked outrage Monday after he flew from Washington to Guam, where the warship is docked, to defend his actions to the crew. In a forceful, profanity-laced speech, he accused Crozier of "betrayal," called him "too naive or too stupid" and suggested the sailors' love for him was misplaced. Hours later, back in Washington, Modly issued an apology, but President Donald Trump publicly questioned Crozier's treatment and said he would get directly involved.



● **Wisconsin held its presidential primary as planned Tuesday, contradicting a state-wide stay-at-home order and defying concern that the election could expose thousands of voters and poll workers to the coronavirus.**

Long lines, shuttered polling stations and workers in hazmat suits marked the most unsettling and confounding contest of the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination race: a vote at the height of a deadly pandemic.

● **A first batch of 8-million protective masks is unloaded from a Lufthansa airplane at the Franz-Josef-Strauss airport in Munich, southern Germany, having arrived from Shanghai.**

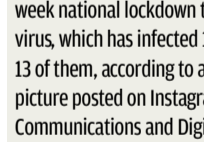
● **A former choirboy who accused Australian Cardinal George Pell of molesting him said Wednesday he accepts the top Vatican cleric's acquittal, but urged survivors of child sex abuse to keep coming forward.** A day after Australia's top court quashed Pell's conviction and released him from jail, "Witness J" said he understood and accepted the court's verdict.



● **Hundreds of people held under mandatory quarantine in Kenya after returning from abroad are up in arms after the government extended their confinement for another 14 days.**

Around 2,000 people were placed in forced quarantine as they arrived in the country from March 22 until international flights were banned three days later, a chaotic process criticised by some passengers as likely to have helped spread the virus.

● **South African President Cyril Ramaphosa yesterday placed on special leave a minister seen lunching at a friend's house in violation of the coronavirus lockdown.** Ramaphosa has ordered a three-week national lockdown to try to brake the virus, which has infected 1,749 people, killing 13 of them, according to an official tally. But a picture posted on Instagram on Sunday showed



Communications and Digital Technologies Minister Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams having lunch with five other people at the home of a former deputy minister earlier that day.

● **The Afghan government will release 100 Taliban prisoners on Wednesday, an official told AFP, a day after the insurgents said they were walking out of talks with Kabul.** The two foes have been negotiating in Kabul since last week to try to finalise a prisoner swap that was originally supposed to have happened by March 10 and paved the way for "intra-Afghan" peace talks between Kabul and the Taliban.

● **Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday announced additional payouts to health professionals working on "the frontline" of the country's fight against the coronavirus.** Doctors treating coronavirus patients would be paid an additional 80,000 rubles (\$1,059) per month, while nurses, ambulance medics and drivers would get between 25,000 and 50,000 rubles.

● **John Prine, an American folk legend widely considered one of his generation's most influential songwriters, died following complications of coronavirus Tuesday, his publicist said on behalf of his family.** He was 73 years old.



● **A deadly Pacific storm slammed into Fiji yesterday, tearing off roofs and flooding towns, after leaving a trail of destruction in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.**

● **Syrian Arab Air Force pilots flying Sukhoi Su-22 military planes and a helicopter dropped bombs containing poisonous chlorine and sarin nerve gas on a village in the country's western Hama region in March 2017, a new team at the global chemical weapons watchdog has concluded in its first report.**