



COVID-19 Rumors, Superstitions & Misinformation in Afghanistan

Date: March 29, 2020

As part of its efforts to tailor messages for Risk Communication & Community Engagement (RCCE) on COVID-19 in Afghanistan, CRS is collecting rumors, superstitions, and misinformation currently being circulated by word-of-mouth or social media in the country. CRS staff shares anything they hear with an internal focal point who is compiling and updating this list. Below are the rumors collected to date:

- Drinking black tea will cure COVID-19.
- Gargling with salt water can cause the coronavirus to disappear in the throat.
- Drinking water washes coronavirus down into your stomach and stomach's acid can kill it.
- Warm weather kills coronavirus.
- Afghan bodies are more resistant to diseases because our immune systems adapted themselves with environmental pollution.
- Violet oil can be used for COVID-19 treatment.
- Slice a lemon and add it to hot water and drink it. It creates like a kind of alkali that makes your body immune to coronavirus.
- Eating dried fruits (with "heaty" attributes) such as almonds, pistachios, etc., will make you resistant to coronavirus.
- Drinking alcohol can kill coronavirus in the body.
- Afghans diagnosed with COVID-19 in Iran are being injected to kill them.
- Iranian hospitals are not accepting any Afghans.
- For those who die from COVID-19, the government is wrapping them up in nylon, covering them in lime and using an excavator to bury them in a central location. People are concerned as this kind of practice is against their religious beliefs.
- Some people believe that hashish (chars) can treat people from COVID-19.
- Tawiz is the other thing that people went to Mullah for and they are take some written papers for COVID-19 treatment.
- Lack of knowledge: if somebody use gloves and masks in community, most people will laugh at them.
- COVID-19 is for non-Muslims (this rumor was spread when the COVID-19 case was not in Afghanistan, especially in rural areas).
- If a COVID-19 affected person dies, there will not be the same prayers as for a normal person who dies. For example, a COVID-19 effected death will not be eligible for performing the Jenaza prayers and he/she will be thrown into the grave by an ambulance. Some photos are circulating in social media as a proof.
- Many Afghans are more concerned with "Seeing is Believing", unless they see through their own eyes, they don't believe it. Many people said that unless they see a person suffering from an illness and die from coronavirus, they wouldn't expect that the virus can kill them as well.
- Malaria drugs can treat all COVID-19.
- This disease will not infect those who have ORH+ blood group.
- Burning wild rue (esfand) will kill the virus. People believe this plant is a holy plant; as such, it has the power to kill the microbes and the virus.
- There is a rumor that this disease will continue for 1-2 years. All borders will be closed. Eventually, there will be famine years and people will die due to starvation.