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Boost your immunity if you have respiratory issues

The Star, Malaysia



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PETALING JAYA: Those with respiratory illnesses should boost their immune systems by getting Covid-19 booster shots and influenza and pneumococcal vaccines, says an expert.

Association of Specialists in Private Medical Practice of Malaysia president Datuk Dr Balwant Singh Gendeh (*pic*) said those with respiratory illnesses such as asthma, pneumonia and other lung problems are prone to getting severe infections if they contract Covid-19.

Besides getting vaccinated, he also advises them to wear face masks, especially when exposed to the public.

"I strongly advise those with respiratory problems to get their boost-

ers; if they have Sinovac for the first two doses, they should get AstraZeneca or Pfizer as their boosters.

"Now we see that because of the pandemic, the threshold for infections within the community is much higher, which I believe is because the virus has brought our immune system to somewhat below the normal threshold.

"Those (especially with respiratory illnesses) above 18 should also get the influenza vaccine to protect themselves," said Dr Balwant, who is also a Fellow of the Academy of



Sciences Malaysia.

As for the elderly, Dr Balwant urged them to take a step further by also taking the pneumococcal vaccine, which would not only protect them from pneumonia but also pneumococcal meningitis.

Individuals with respiratory problems who tested positive for Covid-19 should learn the early signs of pneumonia and immediately seek medical attention to avoid further complications that could be life-threatening, he added.

"This virus (the SARS-CoV-2) has

an affinity for the lungs and these new variants are more aggressive.

"The symptoms can appear anywhere between three and eight days (after contact), and one's condition can quickly deteriorate due to the patient's respiratory problems.

"If pneumonia is not controlled, it can lead to acute respiratory distress syndromes where all the lungs are clogged with fluid instead of oxygen, making it difficult to breathe. So, the patient will need ventilation to survive," he said.

Among the signs to monitor include shortness of breath, a fever and dry cough.

He said many Covid-19 patients experience a dry cough, which can irritate the throat.



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SUMMARIES

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