



Rooted in Trust is a global and local humanitarian response by Internews that aims to combat the spread of rumours and misinformation around COVID-19 in Lebanon. Internews, in collaboration with Maharat Foundation, are collecting rumours through social media monitoring in an effort to combat misinformation and to provide vulnerable communities with accurate information

Internews and Maharat collected and analyzed 433 rumors about COVID-19 circulating on social media between January 5, 2021 and January 31, 2021. This bulletin highlights community perceptions and criticisms about the following topics

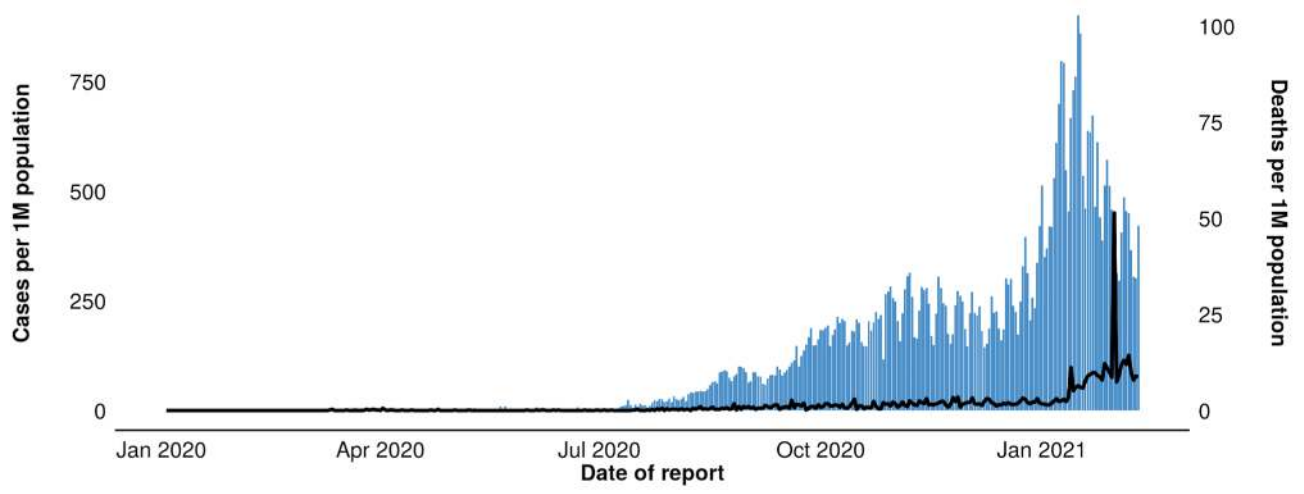
- Home remedies for preventing COVID-19.
- Re-infection of COVID-19.
- Testing and false negatives
- A false claim that the COVID-19 vaccine and the PCR test could cause genetic modifications in people.

## COVID-19 SITUATION IN LEBANON

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), to date there have been 324,859 positive cases of COVID-19 with 3,737 deaths in Lebanon as of February 10 2021. Due to the increase of positive cases, the nation-wide lockdown that began on January 14, was extended until February 22. (1)  
The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) presented the national vaccine framework on January 27, 2021, and launched an online platform for COVID-19 vaccination registration. Their call centre will support people who face difficulties accessing the platform, however the calls will not be free of charge. The vaccines are expected to reach Lebanon around mid-February, and all eligible populations should be covered by the end of 2021.

The graph below demonstrates the increase of numbers of COVID-19 cases in Lebanon since the beginning of the pandemic:(2)

324,859 cases, 3,737 deaths



**Ministry of Public Health (MOPH)**

**Hotline 1787**  
(For any matter related to COVID-19 including access to services, testing, vaccination, and quarantine options. This hotline is not free of charge, standard call rates apply for the time being).

**World Health Organization**

01-612970 | 01-612971  
01-612972  
(For COVID-19 inquiries related to symptoms and testing facilities)

**NEXTCARE -UNHCR partners**

01-504020  
For medical emergencies including hospital

**Lebanese Red Cross**

**140 Emergency Hotline**  
For Infection, Prevention and Control (IPC) Kits.

**UNICEF**

70-582964  
For Infection, Prevention and Control (IPC) Kits.

## WHAT IS A RUMOUR

Rumors are information collected from a first-hand source within the community which could take the shape of a question, criticism, or general comment about a situation or topic. In this bulletin, rumors were collected as data points pulled from social media pages by Internews and Maharat from January 5 to January 31, 2021 across various platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp.

## RUMOUR#1

Various rumors on social media refer to home remedies for preventing COVID-1 such as drinking pomegranate tea or eating bananas.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, rumors have been circulating on social media about home remedies to prevent or treat COVID-19.

Although drinking pomegranate juice or eating bananas have many health benefits and are great sources of vitamins and essential nutrients, they do not prevent COVID-19.

It is important to note that The University of Queensland dismissed the claim as false, and discouraged people from sharing the video

To date, the best way to prevent the spread of the virus is through social distancing, washing hands, and wearing masks. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there are no foods or drinks known until now that prevent COVID-19 .

ANSWER

## RUMOUR #3

A false claim that the COVID-19 vaccine and the PCR test could cause genetic modifications in people.

COVID-19 vaccine will not genetically modify humans. The PfizerBIONTech and the Moderna are mRNA vaccines, not DNA vaccines, meaning they can't combine with our DNA to change our genetic code. MRNA never enters the nucleus of the cell, which is where our DNA is kept, but instead, injects part of the virus' DNA into tissues to stimulate an immune response in the body similar to previous vaccines that have treated diseases such as the seasonal flu or polio. The cell breaks down and gets rid of the mRNA soon after it is finished using the instructions PCR tests detect the presence of the virus by amplifying the virus's genetic material to a point where it can recognize an active coronavirus infection. The nasal swab does not cause harm to the nose or release toxins, although the test does cause mild discomfort which ends quickly after the swab is removed. Vaccines for COVID-19 are needed to slow down and eventually halt the spread of the virus entirely when combined with effective testing and the continuation of prevention measures such as social distancing (5)

A video of a doctor claiming that "even PCR tests will modify human genes by introducing toxins into the brain through the stick used to administer the PCR test , which also explains why the samples are not taken from the mouth."  
Source: whatsapp

ANSWER



## RUMOUR #2

A person can only be infected with COVID-19 once  
A video of a Lebanese doctor that was a guest on Al-Jadeed TV, claiming that if an individual was

According to the WHO, there is no long-term immunity for COVID-19 after contracting it. Although they are rare, some countries have reported cases of reinfection, and studies are ongoing to better understand patient immunity following an infection.(3)

Recent studies do point to short-term periods of immunity for recovered COVID-19 patients, however the exact length of time for immunity remains unknown and varies from person to person. A recovered COVID-19 patient is still advised to wear masks and practice social distancing to avoid reinfection or further spread of the virus.

Studies suggest it takes about 10 days to start making antibodies that can target the virus for the patient to develop a strong immune response. If the adaptive immune response is powerful enough, it could have a lasting memory of the infection that will give protection in the future. However, a recent study shows most people who have had the virus are protected from catching it again for at least 3 months Some are reinfected, and even if asymptomatic can still accommodate high levels of the virus in their noses and mouths, which can be passed on to others. There is still a lot to learn about COVID-19, so it is important to continue practicing protective measures to safeguard our community and those around us. (4)

## RUMOUR#4

People are hesitant to take the Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test due to distrust in the test's ability to detect new variants of COVID-19, and false negatives. Additionally, some rumors are suggesting random tests that could be done at home to detect COVID-19.

ANSWER

In a new study, Johns Hopkins University researchers found that testing people for SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) too early in the course of infection is likely to result in a false negative test, even though they may eventually test positive for the virus.(8)

If someone tests negative early on in their infection, they risk further transferring the virus before their symptoms are evident. After a negative test result, a person should continue to isolate and distance from relatives and friends. If symptoms persist, they should get retested.

Moreover, due to the high price of the PCR test, many people have been resorting to makeshift home tests, believing they are effective. To date, the only way to test for infection is through a Rapid Diagnostic test or the PCR test, which is most accurate 5-7 days after being exposed to an infected person, or immediately when symptoms start to appear.

The Rapid Diagnostic test has a lower detection rate for COVID-19 but is useful in detecting community spread and contact tracing. For individual, suspected cases of COVID-19, the PCR test is recommended (9).

*"The negative PCR tests from the past few days might in fact be positive, meaning that people who were tested are infected by COVID-19, and this has led to the massive spread of the virus recently."*

“ Farewell to PCR testing. There is an effective way to find out whether you are infected with the COVID-19 virus or not. Place a banana peel in your mouth for one minute, if the color of the peel turns light brown, the person is infected. Banana peels have substances that react to COVID-19 ”

Facebook Group

Social media platforms (like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp) allow anyone to publish their thoughts or share their stories to the world. This has led to a flood of fake news and the spread of rumors and misinformation, which is why we should always take into consideration the below. When you come across news or new information on social media:



Identify the news outlet



Check if other news outlets are reporting on the same story



Double check if the WHO or MOPH have corroborated the information



Compare the information presented across different sources to ensure the story is based on scientific facts



Don't rely solely on Facebook groups, Twitter accounts or WhatsApp groups for news on COVID-19. Instead, make sure any news you hear on social media is confirmed by trusted sources such as the WHO

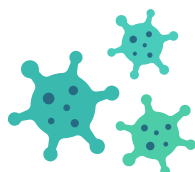


Keep in mind that videos and photos can be manipulated

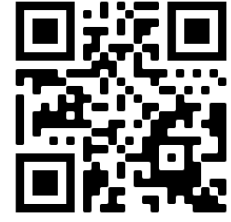


Check the date and origin of the story to confirm whether this information is recent and still valid.

For news related to COVID-19, kindly refer to page 1.



**Read Internews' Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Document about the vaccine in Lebanon and other bulletins by scanning the QR code:**



## SOURCES

- (1) <https://covid19.who.int/region/emro/country/lb>
- (2) <https://worldhealthorg.shinyapps.io/covid/>
- (3) <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/2020/12/why-coronavirus-reinfections-are-happening/>
- (4) <https://www.bbc.com/news/health-52446965>
- (5) <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines/mrna.html#:~:text=COVID%2D19%20mRNA%20vaccines%20are,protein%20piece%20on%20its%20surface.>
- (6) <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-factcheck-covid-19-vaccine-modify-idUSKBN22U2BZ>
- (7) <https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/coronavirus-disease-2019-testing-basics>
- (8) <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/news/newsroom/news-releases/covid-19-test-that-relies-on-viral-genetic-material-gives-false-negative-results-if-used-too-early-in-those-infected>
- (9) <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines/mrna.html#:~:text=COVID%2D19%20mRNA%20vaccines%20are,protein%20piece%20on%20its%20surface>