

Carriers pose highest risk

Specialists: Being indoors or outdoors does not matter

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PETALING JAYA: It does not matter whether a person is indoors or outdoors, rather it is the presence of a positive Covid-19 person that exposes people to the virus, say health experts.

Universiti Sains Malaysia medical epidemiologist and biostatistician Assoc Prof Dr Kamarul Imran Musa said what mattered was whether someone was exposed to an infected person.

"When it comes to Covid-19, it is always more dangerous to be outside. This means someone is at greater risk to contract the virus when they are out and about.

"There is a much higher risk when you are in confined spaces like in an office or a factory. This is because you do not know who you have come across or what you have touched," he said.

Dr Kamarul said it was safer to



stay home even though there might be more than one individual in the house, as one would know them.

"But, if you start to mingle at home with friends and relatives whose status you are unsure of, that increases the risk of catching the virus," he said.

He said people must protect not just themselves but others too as there were those who did not know that they were carriers of the virus.

Everyone should keep a safe distance of at least 2m apart, wear masks and wash their hands regularly, he said.

University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Associate Professor of Biology Erin S. Bromage wrote in a blog post on May 7 that the main sources for infection were in homes, workplaces, public transportation, social gatherings and restaurants.

"This accounts for 90% of all transmission events. In contrast, outbreaks spread from shopping appear to be responsible for a small percentage of traced infections," he said.

Bromage said indoor spaces with limited air exchange or recycled air was a concern.

If someone sat in a well-ventilated space with a few people around, the risk of contracting the virus would be low, he said.

Universiti Putra Malaysia medical epidemiologist and biostatistician Assoc Prof Dr Malina Osman con-

curred that the danger of contracting the virus depended on the presence of a positive Covid-19 person.

"If we can stay away from a person with Covid-19, the risk will be very low," she said, adding that how much time an individual spent near a suspected or infected person also mattered.

"The longer the duration, the higher the risk. The risk also depends on compliance to personal protective equipment (PPE) by individuals, quality of ventilation and evidence of a crowd," she said.

Malaysian Public Health Medicine Specialist Association president Datuk Dr Zainal Ariffin Omar said it was more risky outside the house especially in crowded areas, where poor social distancing was observed.

"It is less risky outside if it is at less crowded places, such as an open public park or garden. It is better to keep away from indoor areas if there are too many people inside," he said.