Chaat, paan cravings make people of Kanpur more vulnerable to Covid-19

In the last 12 days, Kanpur has added 4,060 new coronavirus cases, taking the infection tally beyond the 11,000-mark.

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Kanpur has also recorded 334 deaths so far due to the virus, which is the maximum in UP. (Satish Bate/HT Photo)

A major chunk of people, who tested positive for the coronavirus in the last two weeks in Uttar Pradesh's Kanpur, had one thing in common – they were frequent visitors to roadside paan, chaat, tea stalls and vegetable vendors.

These people assembled around the vendors, did not wear masks and also didn't bother about social distancing. Besides, spitting on the roads and vegetables kept in the open also aided the spread of Covid-19 infection.

These facts emerged in the contact tracing by the health department here. On the basis of inputs given by people about their outings, authorities stationed teams to monitor vendors selling gol-gappas, pakoras, tea and vegetables.

People gathering at such places neither wore masks nor maintained social distancing said a senior official of CMO's core team.

"After random sampling, a vendor and two others tested positive," he said citing an example of a big paan shop in Swaroop Nagar.

Chief medical officer (CMO) Dr AK Mishra said many such vendors tested positive in random sampling by the teams in Kanpur. He wrote to the Kanpur Municipal Corporation (KMC), Food Safety and Drug Authority (FSDA) and DIG/SSP to take effective measures to check the spread of infection.

The letter to the DIG/SSP stated that a huge number of people gather around roadside eateries and paan shops, where social distancing was not being maintained. The letter also pointed to the fact that people were turning up without masks.

"I have requested for strict action against people who are not wearing masks in public places and not adhering to basic safety norms like keeping distance," he added.

In his letter, the CMO suggested strong monitoring of public places, street vendors, kirana stores, milk, ice cream shops and vegetable markets.

The police also stepped up action against people seen without masks. In the last three months, 57,057 people were fined for moving on the road sans mask.

As part of a renewed strategy, we are ensuring that people don't move around in public places without masks. Adhering to basic norms can help people in the current situation when Covid-19 cases are on the rise," said Preetinder Singh, DIG/SSP (Kanpur).

"The police have been asked to monitor gatherings in markets, malls, shops, roads and impose penalties on people showing up without masks. At the same time, no crowding should be allowed at shops and eateries in particular," he added.