

pitahc.gov.ph

PITAHC OFFICIAL STATEMENT ON THE PRACTICE OF TU-OB/SU-OB

3-4 minutes

Tu-ob/Su-ob or steam inhalation is part of Filipino culture and traditional health practices and is one of the most widely-used home remedies to relieve the symptoms of colds as part of primary health care practice.

Scientific studies suggest that steam inhalation is indeed effective against symptoms of colds and that it increases nasal patency.

In the most recent Department of Health (DOH) statistics of active COVID-19 cases, 96% have mild symptoms of low grade fever, colds, cough and sore throat; 0.5% have severe symptoms; and only 0.1 % are critical cases. In a third world country, where resources are limited and accessibility and availability of health care services are areas of concern, traditional and alternative practices are the only affordable and available source of health care.

PITAHC, the main government agency whose mandate is to promote traditional and alternative health care as provided in Republic Act No. 8423, supports the use of tu-ob/su-ob to alleviate the signs and symptoms of respiratory illness found common among COVID-19 patients. It is a safe remedy if done properly, but can possibly hurt otherwise.

There are measures that we recommend for the beneficial use of tu-ob/suob such as: individualized use of bowl and blanket or towel to prevent cross infection; use of water with temperature not exceeding what is bearable to one's skin; prevention of steam from making contact with one's eyes. One should also remember that if symptoms persist or worsen, he/she should seek medical attention. If steam inhalation is done on children, adult supervision is required. Patients with facial lesions and infections are strongly discouraged from this practice.

However, tuob/suob cannot be recommended as a standard care treatment for COVID-19 until it is proven by controlled clinical studies. Thus, PITAHC recommends further studies to be done on the clinical efficacy of tu-ob/su-ob for the prevention and/or treatment of patients who are probable, suspect, and confirmed cases of COVID-19.

The public is still advised to observe preventive measures, specifically frequent handwashing, physical distancing, and wearing of face mask, to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 virus.

References:

- D Ophir et al. *Effects of Steam Inhalation on Nasal Patency and Nasal Symptoms in Patients With the Common Cold*. PubMed. 1987
- Hendley OJ, Abbott RD, Beasley PP, et al. *Effect of Inhalation of Hot Humidified Air on Experimental Rhinovirus Infection*. JAMA. 1994; 271(14):1112-1113.
- Republic Act No. 8423
- Singh M. Singh M, Jaiswal N, Chauhan A. *Heated, humidified air for the common cold*. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Review* 2017, Issue 8. Art. No. CD001728. DOI: