

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT COVID-19

In the Clinic
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What Is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is an infection caused by the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 that can lead to serious health problems and death, especially among older people and those with risk factors. COVID-19 affects people of all ages, and symptoms may be hard to differentiate from those of other viruses, including the flu or the common cold. Its rapid spread caused a global pandemic in 2020. Infection can spread via respiratory particles and, uncommonly, through nonrespiratory bodily fluids and via contact with infected animals and contaminated surfaces.

What Are the Signs and Symptoms?

Signs and symptoms include fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, feeling tired and weak, muscle pain and soreness, headache, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and (uncommonly) rash or neurologic symptoms.

How Is It Diagnosed?

Your doctor will ask you questions about your symptoms and may perform a physical examination. They may recommend testing specimens from your nose or mouth. Some of these tests can be done at home. Because the results can be negative early in the infection, you may have to repeat the tests.

Can It Cause Complications?

Most people have no symptoms or mild symptoms that resolve in 1 to 2 weeks without treatment. In some, COVID-19 can cause serious complications including hospitalization or death. You are at higher risk for complications if you are aged 50 years or older (especially ≥ 65 years); are living in a nursing home; are Black, Hispanic/Latino, or American Indian; are currently or recently pregnant; or have lung disease, diabetes, heart disease or stroke, kidney or liver disorders, obesity, a weakened immune system, tuberculosis, or other medical conditions.

How Is It Treated?

Symptoms are usually treated with rest, drinking clear fluids, and managing fever and aches with over-the-counter medicines like acetaminophen or ibuprofen. If you are at risk for complications or have worsening symptoms, your doctor may prescribe medicines to help your body fight the virus.

Should I Get a COVID-19 Shot, and Can I Receive It at the Same Time as the Flu Vaccine?

Everyone aged 6 months or older should complete the primary series of approved COVID-19 vaccines.



Regular boosters should be considered, especially if you or a close contact is at high risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

The shot does not give you COVID-19. Side effects are usually mild (such as soreness at the injection site) and last a few days. Some people may get fever and muscle aches. More serious side effects, such as inflammation of the heart, can occur but are rare and often resolve completely. The COVID-19 vaccine and other vaccines may be given during the same visit.

How Can I Prevent Spreading COVID-19?

If you think you have COVID-19, stay home from work or school. Use a facemask to cover your mouth and nose, and wash your hands often. Stay away from others for at least 5 days, even if you have no symptoms. If you develop symptoms, avoid others for at least 5 days. Review the CDC website for up-to-date information.

Questions for My Doctor

- What is the best way to prevent getting COVID-19?
- What are the side effects of the COVID-19 shot?
- Can I get a COVID-19 shot and other vaccines at the same time?
- Do I need to be evaluated for COVID-19 in the office, or can you diagnose me over the phone or video?
- Do I need additional testing to confirm that I have COVID-19 and not the flu or another infection?
- Are antiviral treatments likely to speed my recovery?
- Is it possible to get COVID-19 and the flu at the same time?
- How long will my symptoms last?
- How long will I be contagious?

For More Information



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Because the virus can change over time, recommendations can also change. Up-to-date information is available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html).