



I Have Flu-Like Symptoms: What Should I do?

What should I do first?

Consult your primary physician with the first onset of COVID-19 symptoms.

If you are experiencing severe, life-threatening symptoms call 911 or go to your nearest emergency department for evaluation. **Difficulty breathing or severe chest pain is a sign of serious illness and needs medical attention promptly.**

The most important reason to contact your physician right away is that studies show **early treatment** is the KEY to success with COVID. Early treatment is especially critical for people at high-risk.

HIGH RISK PATIENTS: over age 50, with one or more other medical conditions:

- Obesity
- Diabetes, or pre-diabetes (“metabolic syndrome”)
- Lung disease (COPD, pulmonary fibrosis, asthma, cystic fibrosis)
- Kidney disease
- Hypertension
- Autoimmune disorders
- History of cancer treatment
- History of taking corticosteroids regularly

What are the symptoms of COVID?

For most people, the first symptoms are not that different from those you have had before at the beginning of a cold or flu. The difference is that COVID can progress rapidly and in unpredictable ways into very severe respiratory difficulties, marked inflammation damage, and intensified risk of serious blood clots.

These last three complications of COVID are different from what we see with typical colds or seasonal flu episodes, and are what cause the most serious, potentially life-threatening damage to critical organs.

The three most critical symptoms of possible COVID are fever, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing/ pressure in your chest, and severe cough. Shortness of breath can mean shortness of breath at rest or even shortness of breath doing daily activities.

Keep a journal of your symptoms. It helps any doctors you consult know what has been happening if you keep a daily record of your symptoms by time and date and description of your illness.

Your journal can be life-saving when it comes time to see a doctor, especially in an emergency, since an accurate record of your symptoms, the timeline of when they started, how they progressed and how intense they are can help your doctor make better decisions about what treatment you need.



Typical Symptoms You May Experience

(But keep in mind, not everyone has all of them):

- Runny nose, sneezing
- Sudden onset of marked fatigue
- Loss of energy, malaise
- Body aches, muscle aches, headaches
- Cough, though in COVID it is usually a dry cough. You may not produce mucus (sputum). Color of sputum is not necessarily a reliable indicator of severity or type of illness.
- If your cough is causing you to have increased shortness of breath or interfering with your sleep pattern, this could mean the disease is worsening.
- Feeling “feverish,” even if fever (defined as temperature >101 degrees) is not present.
- Chills at night
- Sudden onset of sweats during the day that are unrelated to exercise
- Loss of taste or smell (tends to occur after the other symptoms have been there 1-3 days, but can occur earlier or later)
- Loss of appetite, nausea, GI upset
- Diarrhea may occur, though is not common. It can quickly lead to dehydration and electrolyte imbalances when it does happen.
- After about day 5, when the inflammation gets worse, there is often chest heaviness or tightness, difficulty breathing, shortness of breath.
- Drop in blood oxygen concentration (measured with a finger oximeter you can purchase at your local pharmacy) indicates serious respiratory problems
- Rapid heart rate, palpitations
- Loss of focus, difficulty with concentration and memory