

COVID-19



Reynolds Health Strategies

COVID-19 Symptoms: What People Who Use Drugs Need to Know

COVID-19 symptoms can be hard to tell apart from symptoms of other illnesses, and the only way to know for sure if you have COVID-19 is to get tested. Knowing the symptoms of COVID-19 will help you take care of yourself. If you have a new onset of COVID-19-related symptoms, check with a medical provider to see what you should do next.

Symptoms of COVID-19¹

Symptoms for COVID-19 appear 2 to 14 days after you've been exposed to the virus. These symptoms can range from mild to very serious. Many people who get COVID-19 will have mild symptoms and get better on their own, without medical care. Unfortunately, some have severe complications and can die from their infection. **If you experience any of the serious symptoms listed below, you should seek medical attention immediately.**

Mild/moderate symptoms

- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fever
- Chills
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Muscle aches
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Congestion and/or runny nose
- New loss of taste or smell
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea

Serious symptoms

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion
- Inability to wake or stay awake
- Bluish lips or face
- **Other symptoms**
- Muscle weakness
- Tingling or numbness in the hands and feet
- Nerve pain
- Dizziness
- Seizures

Is it COVID-19 or something else?

COVID-19 symptoms mimic symptoms caused by common conditions, like a cold or the stomach flu. **COVID-19 symptoms can also mimic some of the effects of substance use**, especially the signs of an opioid overdose (for example, bluish lips or inability to wake) or coming down off drugs (fatigue, body aches, nausea and others). Make sure you have naloxone available and are prepared for an opioid overdose: even in the face of this COVID-19 pandemic, you need to be prepared to save people from drug overdoses. On the other hand, **effects of drugs can also mask symptoms**. Opioids can block muscle pain or crystal meth can temporarily increase energy levels and lessen fatigue.

If it's new for you, get it checked

You know your body best. Keep track of your health and seek care for possible COVID-19 symptoms that are new or that are out of the ordinary for you. For example: maybe you have asthma or COPD, so shortness of breath isn't new for you. But if it feels like it's worse than normal, see your medical provider. Even if you don't have COVID-19, it's still good to get a check up. When in doubt, talk to someone. It's better to be safe than sorry. Some places have COVID-19 hotlines that you can call to talk with someone to review your symptoms. Drop-in clinics might be available. Check with your local SSP and see what resources are available in your area.

The people who hang out with you and know you well are also good to listen to. If a friend says something like 'hey, you're looking a little pale and there's some blue to your lips,' that's a sign you might otherwise miss and should act on. Do the same for your people, keep an eye out for symptoms and check in with them regularly.

If you think you have COVID-19 symptoms, call the clinic to alert them before going. They'll see you, but they just want make it safe for everyone. If you don't have a phone, don't go inside: wear a mask and stay 6-feet apart from people, and ask someone else to let a staff-person know what's going on.

About Us

Vital Strategies is a global public health organization working in 70+ countries to strengthen public health systems. Resolve to Save Lives, an initiative of Vital Strategies, aims to prevent at least 100 million deaths from cardiovascular disease and epidemics. Through its Prevent Epidemics program, Resolve to Save Lives has rapidly leveraged existing networks to establish a multi-disciplinary, multi-pronged effort to support countries throughout Africa and beyond. This work is supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Gates Philanthropy Partners, which is funded with support from the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative.

More info at

[PreventEpidemics.org](https://www.preventepidemics.org)
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[VitalStrategies.org](https://www.vitalstrategies.org)

1 <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

2 Mao L, Jin H, Wang M, et al. "Neurologic Manifestations of Hospitalized Patients with Coronavirus Disease 2019 in Wuhan, China. JAMA Neurol; Published online April 10, 2020.