

Recovering from COVID-19

Symptoms of COVID-19 can appear from two to 14 days after you've been exposed to the virus. You can be exposed by droplets from an infected person's coughs and sneezes and by touching a surface that an infected person has contaminated. Most people will recover within one to two weeks. More severe cases can take six weeks or more to recover.



While most patients recover, some may have lung scarring as well as other health conditions as part of post-intensive care syndrome that may include weakness, loss of muscle mass, stress, anxiety and memory changes that can often go unnoticed. If these conditions are recognized, there are management approaches that may help to improve these conditions as well as provide help for the patient's and family's quality of life.

Mild Disease – 80% and more will have mild COVID-19 disease

Recovery Time: About 2 weeks

Symptoms: Upper respiratory tract infection, fever, cough and other mild symptoms such as headache or conjunctivitis. You may or may not have mild pneumonia.

Most people will feel like they have a mild cold or other viral infection – tired and under the weather. Recovery will include home care for symptoms, rest and isolation away from others.

You have recovered from COVID-19 when:

- You are fever free without using fever-reducing medicine for 24 hours.
- Symptoms have improved
- Seven full days have passed since your symptoms appeared

Moderate to Severe Disease – 14% or less will have severe COVID-19 disease

Recovery Time: 3-6 weeks

Symptoms: Severe disease can cause pneumonia. About 50% will have shortness of breath and low oxygen levels due to shortness of breath. Most patients will have a fever, feel very tired and have a dry cough.

To recover you will be in the hospital for a few days. Hospital care may include oxygen. You may have chest pain and exercise intolerance if you have inflammation on your heart. Full recovery may take about a month or more and the WHO recommends home isolation for at least two weeks after symptoms are gone.

Critical Disease – 5% or less will have critical illness related to COVID-19 disease requiring ICU care

Recovery Time: Varies by person

Symptoms: Severe COVID-19 and pneumonia can lead to critical illness, including acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS), cardiac disease, organ dysfunction and shock. Mechanical ventilator support or other advanced therapies such as extracorporeal oxygenation (heart/lung) machines may be required to keep organs working while the body fights the virus. Risk of death is higher in this situation.

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