

Coronavirus Symptoms

According to the World Health Organization, COVID-19 is relatively **mild in about 80% of cases**.

In these mild cases the symptoms are pretty common: fever, a dry cough, and shortness of breath. Some people will also experience a headache, sore throat and fatigue. In a few cases diarrhea has been reported. It may feel as if you have a cold. Or you may feel that flu-like feeling of being hit by a train.

Doctors say these patients with milder symptoms should check in with their physician to make sure their symptoms don't progress to something more serious, but they don't require major medical intervention.

In about 20% of the cases the virus will attack the lungs. Infections can get more serious. As the virus enters lung cells, it starts to replicate, destroying the cells. The body's immune system attempts to contain and control the virus and stop it from making more and more copies of itself. However, the immune system response can also destroy lung tissue and cause inflammation. The end result can be pneumonia. That means the air sacs in the lungs become inflamed and filled with fluid, making it harder to breathe. This makes it harder for the lungs to get oxygen to your blood. The lack of oxygen leads to more inflammation and more problems in the body. The lack of oxygen can cause organs such as the liver or kidneys to fail.

That's what seems to be happening in the most severe cases. About 3% to 5% of patients end up in intensive care, according to the World Health Organization. And many hospitalized patients require supplemental oxygen. In extreme cases, they need mechanical ventilation. The case fatality rate is around 2% or less, based on earlier data from China.

Many of the more serious cases have been in people who are middle-aged and elderly. Those who are the most vulnerable are those with a weakened immune system such as the elderly, long-term smokers, and those with underlying medical conditions, such as heart disease, diabetes or chronic lung disease. The pneumonia vaccine should be considered by these individuals since they are more likely to be infected with pneumococcal bacteria secondary to a viral infection. The CDC recommends all adults 65 years of age and older receive a pneumonia vaccine.

The flu can also cause multi-organ failure. This is why it is important to get the flu shot, so your immune system can more effectively fight the flu virus.

In fact, many infectious disease experts have been making comparisons between this new coronavirus and the flu and common cold, because it appears to be highly transmissible. COVID-19 is acting much like a really bad influenza.