

What to do if you feel sick

Step one: Gauge how sick you are.

Have you just returned from abroad or have had contact with someone internationally, particularly from a country with a lot of COVID-19?

Are you older and have an underlying sickness such as heart disease, lung disease, or diabetes and therefore are at risk for a more severe illness?

If you just have a cough or mild symptoms and have had no contact with anyone who is sick, your mind doesn't need to immediately jump to coronavirus.

Step two: Call your doctor

If you have milder symptoms, give your primary care physician a call first for advice. Clue them to your symptoms, underlying health issues and let them know why you suspect you have coronavirus.

If you're not that sick, call your primary care physician; they can assess whether you've had significant exposures and whether you're sick enough to come to the office.

Hospitals are increasingly turning to telemedicine to minimize contact with patients, so they may first evaluate your symptoms via a phone call, video chat, or live messaging to get a sense of how sick you are.

If your healthcare provider isn't comfortable with evaluating you or if you don't have a doctor, contact your local Board of Health. They can refer you to a nearby healthcare center where you can get evaluated and treated.

If your symptoms are more severe give the emergency room a call and follow their instructions.

Don't just show up to the waiting room without giving your provider a heads up first. This minimizes the risk of infecting others, whether you have influenza, coronavirus or some other respiratory virus.

Step three: Testing

Your physician will work with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and state laboratories to determine if you need testing.

It is important to understand that testing is still limited, it takes time to develop, manufacture and implement.

At this point, laboratory tests should be reserved for those who have a severe illness and patients who've been linked with others who have COVID-19.

In the next week or two, state health departments will have access to more public tests-they'll run them and evaluate them and begin testing

We'll also see more private tests designed and created by individual medical centers and commercial laboratories become readily available.

Step four: Stay healthy at home

Most patients with milder COVID-19 symptoms will be asked to isolate themselves at home according to the CDC.

The most important thing is to keep a distance from others in your home. Wear a facemask only if you're already sick, as this will help protect others from the infection.

Second is to get plenty of rest and stay hydrated, this will help you to prevent pneumonia.

Fever reducers and pain medications, like acetaminophen or ibuprofen can help alleviate symptoms.

Pay attention to your symptoms. If your symptoms worsen, call your doctor as they may want to reevaluate you.

If you think you're getting worse, don't tough it out at home, call your healthcare provider again.

If you have a medical emergency, call 911. Notify the operator that you have COVID-19 or suspect exposure to the virus that causes it. If possible, put on a face mask before emergency medical services arrive.