Plain Language COVID-19 Explanations

Asymptomatic vs. Symptomatic – What is the Difference?

Somebody who is infected with COVID-19 can be either symptomatic or asymptomatic

1) Symptomatic: This is when an individual shows symptom of having the disease. That could mean that they are coughing, having difficulty breathing, or have a high fever.

2) Asymptomatic: This is when people don't show any symptoms of sickness (coughing, fever, difficulty breathing) but are still infected with the virus Experts believe that it is possible for somebody who is asymptomatic to spread COVID-19 to other people. .

COVID-19 affects different people in different ways. One individual can feel closer to normal with mild symptoms such as a runny nose, sore throat, or aches and pains while, it could result in severe symptoms in another individual (difficulty breathing).This is why it's important to stay home, even if you only feel a little bit sick.

What Is a Virus?

A virus is very small. It is smaller than any cell in your body, or even other things that can make you sick, like bacteria.

A virus cannot infect us or make us sick on their own, they need to infect a host cell to survive and to reproduce.

Viruses have a special "key" to enter the "door" on the outside of a human cell. In this case, the COVID-19 virus has special "spikes" on the outside surface that it uses to open the door of the cell.

Then, it forces the human cell to make more copies of itself to infect other cells in the body.

How Does COVID-19 Spread?

COVID-19 is caused by a virus called SARS-CoV-2. The virus that causes COVID-19 can get inside cells in your respiratory system (nose to lungs) from:

- Little droplets in the air containing the virus that stick to a person's eyes, nose or mouth or;

- By touching a surface or an object containing the virus and then touching one's eyes, nose, and mouth.

It can spread from person to person when someone with COVID-19 coughs, sneezes or exhales and small droplets containing the virus. It can also be transmitted from touching a surface containing the virus and then one's eyes, nose, or mouth.

This is why you should cover your cough with your elbow, keep at least 2 meters between you and people who aren't part of your household, avoid touching your face, and wash your hands with soap and water.

How Does COVID-19 Infect Your Body?

Step 1: Infection

The virus quickly takes over cells in your lungs to make more copies of itself. These cells eventually die.

Step 2: Immune System Response

Your immune system tries to fight the virus. It heats up the body, which causes a fever. It also tries to use immune system cells to attack the virus. Sometimes these immune cells kill more than the virus. For some people, the immune system will also kill healthy tissue.

This is one reason why people feel tired and achy when they have COVID-19.

Step 3: Progression

The virus moves further into your lungs as you breathe. Your lungs start to build up fluid which makes it hard to breathe, so you start to cough.

When you cough, you're also coughing viruses out of your lungs that helps it to spread to other people.

Step 4: Pneumonia (In Some Cases)

In some people, COVID-19 can cause pneumonia and, even death. Pneumonia occurs when the COVID-19 virus causes small air sacs in your lungs to get really inflamed by having them fill with fluid. This stops oxygen from reaching your blood and is called pneumonia.

When there isn't enough oxygen in your blood, it can cause other organs stop working or even death. That is why people with COVID-19 sometimes must be put on oxygen therapy or ventilators.

COVID-19 affects different people in different ways; it depends a lot on how strong your immune system is. Older age and some medical conditions like lung diseases, high blood pressure, and diabetes, among others, weaken your immune system and make it more likely that you will become sick with COVID-19.

This is how COVID-19 could affect your body and why we want to make sure that Elders and people with weaker immune systems do not get the virus.

How long can the COVID-19 virus stay alive on surfaces?

COVID-19 viruses can survive on surfaces from several hours to days.

This varies under different conditions such as the type of surface, temperature, or humidity.

The virus has been detectable up to four hours on copper, up to 24 hours on cardboard and up to two to three days on plastic and stainless steel.

Can COVID-19 be Treated?

COVID-19 is a virus. This means that antibiotics do not work for treatment because antibiotics only work against bacteria.

Vaccines are products that can help protect us from many viruses and bacteria. However, since COVID-19 is a new virus, there is no vaccine for it yet. It can sometimes take several years for a vaccine to be developed.

What can I do to protect against COVID-19?

To protect yourself and to prevent the spread of COVID-19 please:

- Clean your hands often. Use soap and water and wash for 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Maintain at least a 2-meter safe distance from anyone who isn't part of your household.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Cover your nose and mouth with your bent elbow or a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Stay home if you feel unwell. If you have a fever, a cough, and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention. Call in advance.
- Follow the directions of your local health authority, or;
- Call Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 if you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.