

# Cough, fever, fatigue? Head to CDC's online coronavirus symptom checker

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You went jogging and developed a cough. You did some yard work and

now you're wheezing. Maybe your throat is scratchy.

Your first thought is: Do I have COVID-19?

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has posted a new coronavirus self-checker on its website that might ease your mind and steer you toward any [medical help](#) you might need.

The worst part about the coronavirus pandemic is the way the admittedly vague symptoms of the infectious disease plays tricks on your mind, experts say.

"There's a lot of symptoms here that are going to be nonspecific, as with any upper respiratory infection, and the fact is that many cases of coronavirus are very mild," said Dr. Amesh Adalja, a senior scholar with the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security in Baltimore. "You're going to have people who don't know what to do."

The CDC's website has a tracker to help figure out if you have anything to worry about.

The [web tool](#) first asks if you are ill or caring for someone who's ill, and where you are located. It gathers basic information such as age and gender.

The tracker then asks about a series of life-threatening symptoms, including some that aren't at all related to COVID-19.

These include gasping for air, blue-colored lips or face, severe pain or pressure in the chest, severe dizziness or lightheadedness, slurred speech, or seizures.

The tracker starts out like this:

"They're trying to get anybody who needs emergency medical attention to seek help immediately," said clinical pathologist Dr. Gary Procop, medical director and co-chair of Cleveland Clinic's Enterprise Laboratory Stewardship Committee. "All of the other diseases we have are still going on while we're in the middle of the COVID crisis, right?"

After asking about the worst symptoms, the CDC tool then asks if within the past two weeks you've either contacted someone diagnosed with COVID-19 or live in or visited a region where there's active coronavirus transmission.

The tool asks whether you have any of the symptoms directly linked to COVID-19—fever, shortness of breath, cough—and whether you live in or work at a long-term care facility, nursing home, hospital or medical-related office or service.

Finally, it asks you if you have any chronic illnesses that could put you at high risk of death following coronavirus infection, including lung disease, heart failure, kidney failure or extreme obesity.

After these questions, the tool tells you whether you should stay home and take care of yourself, reach out to your [health care provider](#), or go to the emergency room.

"I really like it a lot, and I give them credit for taking this type of approach," Procop said of the tool. "I went in as a variety of different kinds of patient profiles and saw how it did. I was pretty impressed."

The CDC tool could, among other things, relieve some of the stress that

health care systems are now under and prevent further transmission of the [coronavirus](#).

"We don't want people coming to the emergency department or doctor's offices unnecessarily. Anything that can decrease the load on hospitals and health care facilities is helpful," Adalja said.

Procop agreed.

"Unless you're in dire straits, we don't want folks with mild or moderate symptoms coming to the emergency department. We would like to have a more controlled manner of introducing them into the health care setting," Procop said.

"Let's say someone did this profile and they were only mildly ill," Procop continued. "They're probably not going to take up a bed anyway, but they could just show up in the emergency department, expose all the other people in the waiting room and potentially expose caregivers."

Other [symptom](#) tracking apps also are available for smartphones.

One such app from the United Kingdom had more than 750,000 downloads following its launch Tuesday morning, according to TechCrunch. The C-19 COVID Symptom Tracker, developed by King's College London, is expected to launch soon in the United States as well.

Mount Sinai health care workers are using their own app to log their symptoms while they're on the job, said Eileen McStay, a registered nurse at the Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City.

"Our minds are playing games with us," McStay said, noting that simple things like running out of breath while walking up a hill causes them to question their health.

If medical professionals need this sort of help, then everyone else does as well, experts said.

"I do think having a trusted source of information out there to help them work through their symptoms and decide when they need to see a doctor is useful," Adalja said.

**More information:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more about [COVID-19 symptoms and self-checking](#).

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