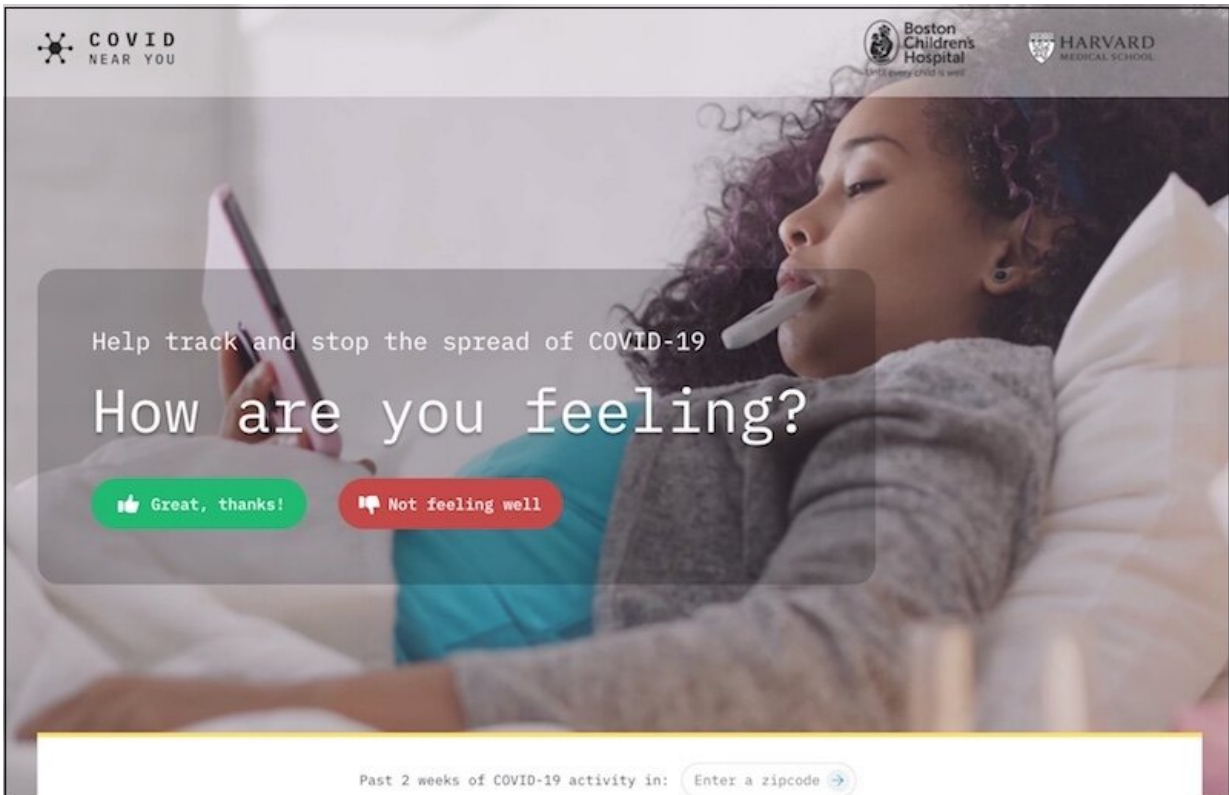# Crowdsourcing the COVID-19 pandemic in real time

April 13 2020

COVID Near You is asking people to contribute data to create a better snapshot of COVID-19 their communities. Credit: Children's Hospital Boston

News about the global COVID-19 pandemic changes virtually minute by minute. Beyond staying home, handwashing, and covering your cough, you may wonder what you can do to help. A new website developed by

the HealthMap team at Boston Children's Hospital, [COVID Near You](#), offers one way.

Taking a moment to share your [health status](#) on a given day will help the experts track specific locations where COVID-19 is spreading or receding, and at what rate.

As confirmed cases and deaths from COVID-19 mount, testing for the virus remains limited in the United States. Researchers, [public health experts](#), and [government officials](#) are still struggling to understand how many people are infected locally, statewide, and nationally.

COVID Near You invites the public to report current symptoms in real time, identified only by zip code. The site uses the same crowdsourcing technology that HealthMap used to build [Flu Near You](#) nearly a decade ago. That tracker has helped people understand [influenza activity](#) in their community while aiding experts with early detection and local forecasting.

Augmenting public health tracking of COVID-19

Like Flu Near You, COVID Near You visually maps the data it gathers to help identify current and potential COVID-19 hotspots. Reporting is quick, easy, and anonymous, and any U.S. resident over age 13 can participate.

"The public's real-time reports of COVID-19-related symptoms can augment traditional public health tracking and help everyone understand where COVID-19 symptoms are occurring in their community," says Kara Sewalk, MPH, an epidemiologist with HealthMap who helped create COVID Near You. "The more people join, the stronger the 'signals' in the data we gather."

Provided by Children's Hospital Boston

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