

Three reasons why trying to get COVID is a bad idea

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(HealthDay)—If you're wondering whether to intentionally expose

yourself to the Omicron variant with the goal of developing immunity, the answer is absolutely not, experts say.

"It sounds like playing with fire to me," said Dr. Nicole Van Groningen, a hospitalist who has treated hundreds of COVID-19 patients at Cedars-Sinai in Los Angeles.

First of all, you do risk becoming severely ill, even though [Omicron appears to cause milder illness](#) among many vaccinated people.

"There is no guarantee you'll have a mild case," Van Groningen said in a Cedars-Sinai news release. "Some people still get really sick and need to come to the hospital. Others feel really miserable at home. Some patients say it's worse than the worst flu they ever had."

Secondly, you could infect others, who could become extremely ill.

"You might be young, otherwise healthy and do fine," said Dr. Catherine Le, an infectious disease expert and co-director of the Cedars-Sinai COVID-19 Recovery Program.

"But let's say you don't know exactly when you got COVID-19 or when you became infectious, and you give it to someone in your family or the community who is at risk for a bad outcome. It's very hard to control," she noted.

"If you're searching for immunity, why not just get vaccinated?" Le said. "And anyone who is eligible for a booster shot should get one. Vaccination is the most potent weapon we have against this pandemic."

Finally, another risk of intentionally getting infected is the possibility of developing complications such as [long COVID](#), which affects up to 30% of people who get the disease.

"You don't have to have COVID-19 really bad to get all these potentially really severe and debilitating symptoms that can last for over a year," Le said. "A wide variety of people can get it, including adolescents. Young, healthy people make up a lot of our clinic."

Some long COVID patients of working age are on disability for at least six months. "That's a huge impact on your life, and we have no idea if Omicron will be any different," Le said.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [COVID-19](#).

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