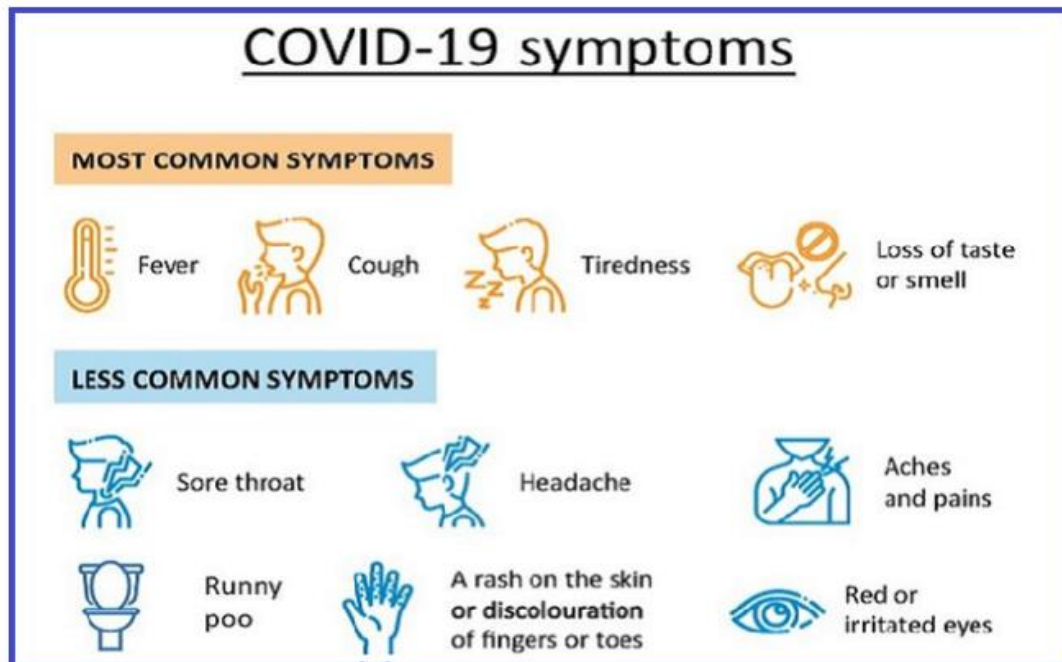


COVID-19 symptom timeline – what to expect

Most people will have mild COVID-19 symptoms for up to 2 weeks. Symptoms tend to appear around 2–5 days after you are infected but can take up to 14 days to show.



Days 1–3

Early symptoms of COVID-19 vary widely.

- It can start with a tickle in your throat, a cough, fever or headache. You may also feel short of breath or a little pressure in your chest.
- Sometimes it begins with a bout of diarrhoea (runny poo).
- You may feel tired and/or may lose your sense of taste and smell.
- You may experience some or none of these symptoms.

Even if you have a mild COVID-19 infection, avoid running, workouts, weights and high impact activities until you've been cleared by your healthcare team.

Days 4–6

These are important days to be more aware of your symptoms. This is when lung (respiratory) symptoms may start to get worse, especially for older people and people who have other conditions like **high blood pressure**, **obesity** or **diabetes**.

- You may start to feel worse and may have aches, chills, cough and an inability to get comfortable.
- Some younger people may develop rashes, including itchy red patches, swelling or blistering on your toes or fingers.

Days 7–8

- For people with mild illness, the worst is generally over after a week.
- Some people may get worse at this point, or start to feel better briefly then take a turn for the worse.
- **If you start to feel worse, contact your healthcare team.**

Days 8–12 (week 2)

Continue to monitor your symptoms and record them in your diary.

- You may feel better sleeping on your front/stomach or side (see graphic below).
- **If you start to feel worse, contact your healthcare team.**

Days 13–14

- Most people will feel better by now. Some people feel more tired than usual.
- A slow return to activity is advised.
- If you have ongoing severe symptoms, your healthcare team will advise you what to do.
- This is why recording your symptoms is so important.

How to manage your symptoms

There is no specific treatment for COVID-19. It is important to rest at home and drink plenty of fluids.

Treatment is aimed at easing your symptoms. Your healthcare team may suggest the following medicines to ease your symptoms.

- **Aches and pains:** [Paracetamol](#) or [ibuprofen](#) to help with fever, headaches and body aches.
- **Blocked or runny nose, or cough:** Nasal sprays, decongestants, lozenges or cough mixtures.
- **Sore throat:** Suck a teaspoon of honey or gargle with salt water. You can also try using a gargle, throat spray or pain-relief (anaesthetic) lozenges.
- **Vomiting (being sick) and diarrhoea (runny poo):** The most important thing is to drink plenty of fluids, to avoid dehydration.

Some people may be prescribed an inhaler called Pulmicort. [Pulmicort](#) is sometimes used to treat COVID-19 infection in the elderly and those with certain underlying health conditions. Read more about [how to manage your symptoms if you are COVID-19 positive](#).

Your healthcare team will advise what is suitable and help arrange delivery if needed.

Note: When you have COVID-19, the physical symptoms of the illness may be obvious and are important to monitor, but taking care of your mental health and wellbeing is also important. Read more about [taking care of your mental wellbeing if you are COVID positive](#).

Recovery

Even if you had a mild COVID-19 infection, avoid running, strenuous exercise and high impact activities until you've been cleared by your healthcare team. Healthcare professionals advise a slow, gradual return to activity. People with severe symptoms and people who needed extra treatment due to low oxygen levels may still feel unwell and tired. It may take some time to recover.

Everyone will have a different experience in their recovery from COVID-19. Some people may recover in days, some in weeks. For others, it could be months. But although each case is unique, people recovering from more severe symptoms are likely to face a longer recovery period. Learn more about [long COVID](#).