



The Ongoing Challenges of COVID-19

The past two and a half years of our lives have been inundated with news and information about COVID-19, so much so that it seems like we may feel unsure of what's going on. Where are we in the pandemic? Is COVID-19 still something we should be concerned about?

In the wake of these common questions and concerns, we spoke to our company doctor, John Georgio, M.D., to get some answers and suggestions. Let's dive in!

Where are we in terms of the COVID-19 pandemic?

We could be considered post-COVID or still in the middle of the ongoing pandemic, depending on who you ask. But one thing is for sure; COVID is not going to completely go away out of our lives. But rest assured, scientists are keeping a close eye on different strains and mutations that crop up.

Wait, so COVID is here to stay?

This is the general scientific consensus as of now. The thought is that we will learn to live with COVID like we live with the flu; a menace that crops up seasonally and can be vaccinated against. Depending on future variants, it's possible we can safely (for the most part) adapt to COVID being a part of our lives. We should not feel the need to panic or worry, however. Scientists are doing their due diligence and learning every single thing they can about all aspects of COVID and its various strains. What we as a whole world know about COVID now is vastly superior in comparison to what we knew when the pandemic started. Thanks to the guiding hand of science and our medical professionals, we should feel safe to continue living on our lives as we were.

What are some top recommendations in regards to protecting myself and others from COVID?

First and foremost, always keep up with and follow the current recommendations from the CDC (Center for Disease Control). These are based on current scientific findings, and will have the most accurate information to base your planning and understanding on. It's certainly possible that you could find some "official" looking article on social media, perhaps posted by family or friends on places like Facebook/Meta. These articles

could offer suggestions or information that is opposite of the current CDC recommendations, which could put you and those around you in danger if followed.

If you're consciously monitoring your COVID status, it's important to take note of our symptoms. If you suspect possible COVID infection, it's good to think, "What symptoms am I feeling?", "How long have I felt like this?", and "When did I begin to feel this way?" as starting questions. It's beneficial to combine symptom/contact tracing with self-testing, or even testing at a local medical facility, if possible. More invasive tests such as PCR tend to be a bit more reliable, but don't dismiss the value of self-testing. If you're feeling symptomatic and your self-test is negative, it's advised that you stay home and retest a couple of days later in case of a false negative.

How about masks?

Recommendations for COVID are different depending on what area or county you live in. For example, Orange County and LA County have differing recommendations/requirements in regard to COVID. It's best to specifically seek out information about the county you live in, if possible. It's not necessary to wear a mask, but you definitely can if you would like to! Make sure your mask is a well-fitted one as well. M95 masks are the most adept in preventing the spread and transmission of COVID, so one of those would be your best bet.

I'm immunocompromised. What do I need to do differently?

In addition to keeping up with CDC recommendations, it's best to continue stringent mask-wearing as well as other protective measures. These could include wearing gloves and a gown in public, depending on the severity and level of concern. The classic COVID recommendations apply here as well, such as staying six feet from others (perhaps even farther) and not going to large gatherings of people. The best person to ask for advice would be your doctor, who would have specific knowledge of what causes you to be immunocompromised and thus could help tailor a plan just for you!

Okay, we're essentially experts at COVID stuff now. What's all this about Monkeypox?!

There's no cause for concern for Monkeypox at the same level of concern for COVID. Monkeypox is infectious in certain populations where there is a lot of direct contact between individuals, but it's not particularly lethal. This isn't to say that it's impossible for someone (such as an immunocompromised person) to die from it, but that the average run-of-the-mill person should be able to overcome it somewhat easily. We have a better understanding of Monkeypox now as compared to when COVID first emerged; a vaccine is making its way out to the population quite quickly, and medical professionals have an understanding on how to treat those infected with it.

In short, we should all work hard to continue our persistence in combatting COVID-19, as well as the new Monkeypox virus. By doing so, we can take care of not only ourselves, but each other.