

When to see your doctor about COVID-19

Chances are you have lots of procedures in place to protect yourself from the novel coronavirus.

- You're staying home except for truly essential errands, going for walks with plenty of distance between yourself and others.
- You know how to clean anything brought into the house and you're giving soap and water a workout like never before.

But few of us have prepared for how we'll react if we start feeling sick and suspect we have COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus.

- At what point do I call a doctor?
- Should I head to an emergency room?

When to call a doctor

If you learn that you have been exposed to someone who has tested positive for the virus or who has become sick, stay inside and monitor yourself for any symptoms for the next 14 days, [UCI Health infectious disease experts](#) advise.

Call your doctor's office if you develop the signature symptoms associated with COVID-19, including:

- Fever (above 100.4 Fahrenheit)
- New cough
- New shortness of breath

Before fever and lower respiratory symptoms emerge, other symptoms often occur, say UCI Health experts. They include:

- Sore throat
- Headache
- Diarrhea
- Nausea or vomiting
- Loss of smell or taste

If you develop a fever, cough or shortness of breath, call your healthcare provider's office. Your doctor will determine whether you should be seen by a physician, tested, go immediately to a medical facility or care for yourself at home.

When symptoms are severe

If symptoms become severe — especially if you are having trouble breathing, have pain or pressure in the chest, bluish lips or feel confused — call 911 or go to your nearest emergency department.

It's vital to call ahead to let healthcare personnel know you're coming and what your symptoms are, says the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC).

Wear a mask before entering the emergency department. If you do not have a mask, ask for one when you arrive. This is necessary to protect yourself, healthcare personnel and other patients. Once you have been assessed, the physician will determine what additional care is needed.

For more information, visit ucihealth.org/covid-19