

## Why Should I Care About COVID-19?

**Written by:**

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Here's a question many physicians are hearing from patients, friends and neighbours. "I'm 35 years old and pretty healthy. I'm not likely to die from COVID-19, so why should I have to follow all these rules?"

It is true that COVID-19 is most likely to cause death in those who are older and those with underlying medical conditions. However, there are five good reasons why you should take precautions to protect yourself, your family and friends.

### **One. You protect your health now and in the future.**

Many otherwise healthy young people have reported short-, medium-, and long-term consequences from COVID-19 infection. While these are not serious enough to require hospitalization, they will keep you from returning to your normal activities and enjoying life. In some cases, these symptoms have lasted for months and may be permanent.

These have included:

- a diagnosis of lasting damage to the muscle of the heart, lung and lung capacity, the brain (including seizures and strokes), and blood clotting problems resulting in further damage to the lungs, liver, kidneys, and other organs. Some of these have occurred even with only mild COVID-19 symptoms and may develop into more serious problems in the future.
- problems with their physical appearance. These cases report rashes and hair loss.
- problems with thinking. These cases report problems with memory, concentration, or sleeping.,
- problems with an ability to exercise or enjoy the normal activities of life. These cases report problems with a loss of fitness causing an inability to exercise as long or as hard as they used to, increased fatigue with normal activities, shortness of breath, joint, and muscle pain.
- problems with depressed mood and fatigue.
- loss of sense of smell and taste. This has ruined an appreciation for cooking, for eating, and has made people unhappy and depressed.

In all, 10-15% of people known to have had COVID-19 have gone on to suffer from Long-COVID with symptoms ranging from persistent cough, shortness of breath, profound fatigue, heart problems, sleep disorders and difficulty concentrating for months. The best way to "cure" these is not to get them in the first place by ensuring you do not get COVID-19.

### **Two. You protect yourself from hospitalization or worse.**

Interestingly the average age of mortality from COVID-19 in Alberta is 82 (Range 20 to 107 years), but the average age of hospitalization with an ICU stay is 59 (Range 0-89 years). 1760 COVID-19 deaths in Alberta have been in the elderly, but there have been 97 fatalities in those under age 60, with 9 of these in their



twenties. It is also important to note that “comorbidities” associated with COVID-19 death include obesity, high blood pressure and diabetes, all common in Alberta. Approximately 75% of North American adults having one or more risk factor for severe COVID-19 disease.

Trust me, no one who has ever stayed in an ICU, wants to go back again, ever. So, you may be more at risk of a serious outcome than you think, and even if the risk of death is low in your age range, it is not zero. Why take the chance of getting COVID-19 in the first place?

### **Three. You protect others.**

Each day you may come in to contact with elderly people or people with underlying medical conditions and if you transmit COVID-19 to them you could be responsible for harming them and causing suffering to the people who love them. You could also infect another young friend or neighbour, who in turn infects their grandparent or a close friend who has diabetes or obesity and harm them. How responsible would you feel? Since some infectious people have no or mild symptoms and can unknowingly spread the virus, it is best for everyone to follow the precautions all the time. We also have variant strains of COVID-19 now in Alberta which means the virus spreads more easily and may be more deadly than what we have seen so far.

### **Four. You can get back to your normal life sooner.**

The more people follow the rules, the faster we get COVID-19 under control. The faster we get it under control, the sooner we can all get back to our normal lives.

### **Five. You are a moral and ethical person.**

Following the rules means we protect the health and lives of ourselves and others. What in our life is more important than that?