

Ministry of Health

## COVID-19 Reference Document for Symptoms

Version 8.0 – August 26, 2021

This document outlines the symptoms, signs, and clinical features that have been most commonly associated with COVID-19. This information is current as of August 26, 2021 and may be updated as the situation on COVID-19 continues to evolve. If there is a discrepancy between this list and other guidance, this list should be considered the most up to date information.

When assessing for the symptoms below the focus should be on evaluating if they are **new, worsening, or different from an individual's baseline health status (usual state)**. Symptoms should not be chronic or related to other known causes or conditions (see examples below).

### The most common symptoms of COVID-19 that require immediate self-isolation and COVID-19 testing include:

- **Fever** (temperature of 37.8°C/100.0°F or greater) and/or **chills**
- **Cough** (that is new or worsening (e.g. continuous, more than usual if chronic cough) including croup (barking cough, making a whistling noise when breathing)
  - *Not related to other known causes or conditions for which current symptoms do not represent a flare-up/exacerbation related to infection (e.g., chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)*
- **Shortness of breath** (dyspnea, out of breath, unable to breathe deeply, wheeze, that is worse than usual if chronically short of breath)
  - *Not related to other known causes or conditions (e.g., chronic heart failure, asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)*
- **New olfactory or taste disorder** (decrease or loss of smell or taste)
  - *Not related to other known causes or conditions (e.g., nasal polyps, allergies, neurological disorders)*

### Other symptoms of COVID-19 in adults (>18 years old) can include:

- **Fatigue, lethargy, or malaise** (general feeling of being unwell, lack of energy, extreme tiredness) that is unusual or unexplained
  - *Not related to other known causes or conditions (e.g., depression, insomnia, thyroid dysfunction, anemia, malignancy, receiving a COVID-19 vaccine in the past 48 hours)*
- **Myalgias** (muscle aches and pain) that are unexplained, unusual, or long-lasting

- *Not related to other known causes or conditions (e.g., fibromyalgia, receiving a COVID-19 vaccine in the past 48 hours)*

### **Other symptoms of COVID-19 in children (<18 years old) can include:**

- **Nausea, vomiting and/or Diarrhea**
  - *Not related to other known causes or conditions (e.g. transient vomiting due to anxiety in children, chronic vestibular dysfunction, irritable bowel syndrome, inflammatory bowel disease, side effect of medication)*

As per regular protocols, all sick individuals with any symptoms of any illness should stay home, and seek assessment from their regular health care provider if required. Primary care physicians may provide further referrals based on a full clinical assessment of the symptomology and patient history. Individuals with severe symptoms requiring emergency care should go to their nearest emergency department.

### **Guidance for Public Health Units**

If a high-risk contact develops symptoms from the list below, the Public Health Unit should recommend self-isolation in addition to testing. If the individual is fully immunized or previously positive, they may end self-isolation after receiving a negative test result and once symptoms have been resolving for 24 hours. If they are experiencing gastrointestinal (GI) symptoms (nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain), symptoms need to be resolving for at least 48 hours.

Other symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- **Sore throat** (painful swallowing or difficulty swallowing)
  - *Not related to other known causes or conditions (e.g., post nasal drip, gastroesophageal reflux)*
- **Rhinorrhea** (runny nose)
  - *Not related to other known causes or conditions (e.g., returning inside from the cold, chronic sinusitis unchanged from baseline)*
- **Nasal congestion** (stuffy nose)
  - *Not related to other known causes or conditions (e.g., seasonal allergies)*
- **Abdominal pain** that is persistent or ongoing
  - *Not related to other known causes or conditions (e.g., menstrual cramps, gastroesophageal reflux disease)*
- **Headache** that is new and persistent, unusual, unexplained, or long-lasting
  - *Not related to other known causes or conditions (e.g., tension-type headaches, chronic migraines, receiving a COVID-19 vaccine in the last 48 hours)*
- **Conjunctivitis** (pink eye)
  - *Not related to other known causes or conditions (e.g., blepharitis, recurrent styes)*

- **Decreased or lack of appetite**

- *For young children and not related to other known causes or conditions (e.g., anxiety, constipation)*

For **high-risk contacts**, the PHU should use the onset date of **any symptom** to determine the period of communicability and to determine the period of self-isolation.

For individuals who are **not high-risk contacts**, the period of communicability is 48 hours prior to the onset of **any symptom**. For these individuals, the period of self-isolation is 10 days from the development of any **COVID-19 specific symptom** or until they receive a negative test result and symptoms have been resolving for 24 hours if they are fully vaccinated or previously positive. If they are experiencing gastrointestinal (GI) symptoms (nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain), symptoms need to be resolving for at least 48 hours.