CDC: COVID-19 Can Result in Prolonged Illness, Even in Young Adults

Weeks after testing positive for the coronavirus, one in five young adults without chronic conditions had not fully recovered.

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A new report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reveals that recovery from COVID-19 can take a long time, even in young adults with no chronic conditions.

For their inquiry, CDC researchers conducted a multistate telephone survey of symptomatic adults ages 18 and older who had tested positive for the coronavirus. Interviews took place 14 to 21 days after the initial test date.

Among those with available data on their return to usual health, 65% reported returning to their usual state of health a median of seven days from the date of testing, while 35% reported not getting back to their usual state of health within 14 to 21 days following their positive test result. Of these individuals, 26% were 18 to 34 years old, 32% were 35 to 49 years old and 47% were age 50 and older.

Folks with chronic conditions were also significantly affected. Of the 180 people without any or just one chronic medical condition, 28% said their health hadn't returned to normal. Among the 39 with two chronic medical conditions and the 44 with three or more illnesses, 46% and 57%, respectively, did not recover their previous health status.

Among younger respondents ages 18 to 34 years with no chronic medical condition, 19% reported not having returned to their usual state of health.

Symptomatic outpatients reported experiencing an average seven of 17 of the symptoms described in the interview. Fatigue, cough and headache were the most common problems reported. Fever and chills resolved in 97% and 96% of respondents, respectively, while cough, fatigue and shortness of breath were less likely to go away.

"Public health messaging should target populations that might not perceive COVID-19 as being severe or prolonged, including young adults and those without chronic underlying medical conditions," advised CDC experts. "Preventative measures, including social distancing, frequent handwashing and the consistent and correct use of face coverings in public, should be strongly encouraged to slow the spread of SARS-CoV-2."

For related coverage, read "CDC: Most Americans Don’t Know How They Got the New Coronavirus“ and ”UPDATED: Who Is Most Susceptible to the New Coronavirus?" Also, click here for more coronavirus news.

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