

TOI COVID GUIDE

If you have mild Covid, here's how you can recover at home

4 Out Of Every 5 Covid Patients Don't Need Hospitalisation, But Preparing In Advance Can Make Recovery Less Stressful

With India recording more than 3 lakh new Covid cases daily, hospital beds and oxygen cylinders are scarce. The only good news is that 81% of Covid patients have mild or no symptoms, and can recover at home. Here's a ready reckoner for Covid care at home.

First signs of disease

A dry cough, sore throat, fever and runny nose are common early symptoms of Covid-19. Many patients also report loss of smell and taste, headaches, fatigue and body aches. There are some other red flags also, such as breathlessness, falling oxygen saturation, persistent pain or pressure in chest, poor appetite, loose motions, fatigue, weakness or numbness in any limb or face, etc.

In severe cases, Covid progresses from the first symptoms to pneumonia in about five days, and to severe hypoxemia and ICU admission in 7-12 days. Therefore, careful health monitoring is important.

When symptoms arise

If you experience Covid symptoms, immediately isolate in a well-ventilated room with an attached bathroom, without waiting to get tested. The longer you take to self-isolate, the higher the risk of infecting others.

If you test positive and are advised home isolation, you will need to monitor your temperature and oxygen level, and keep the district surveillance officer (DSO) informed. The DSO will arrange a follow-up by a surveillance team. You will also need the Aarogya Setu app on your mobile phone. Try to keep at least six feet apart from other housemates. Do not share glasses, towels and mobile phones. If you need to share space, ensure that the room has good airflow.

Checking oxygen level

A pulse oximeter checks the oxygen level in blood. If you use it in bed or while resting, it won't detect 'silent' or latent hypoxia (low oxygen). Doctors recommend the 'six-minute walk test': note down your oxygen level, walk for six minutes and check again. If the level drops by six points or more, seek medical help. You should check temperature and oxygen saturation every four hours.

Ending home quarantine

The health ministry says you will be alright 10 days after the onset of symptoms if you have not had fever for the last three days. Even after that, you will be advised to isolate at home and self-monitor for seven more days. If you are asymptomatic, you can be with others 10 days after testing positive.

Recovering after Covid

Once you are free to step out, exercise regularly to improve breathing and build strength. Adequate rest and nutritious meals will also speed up recovery. But watch out for signs of 'long Covid', such as a cough that lasts months, hoarse voice, headache, diarrhoea, loss of appetite, and shortness of breath.

Text: Sushmita Choudhury

QUARANTINE VS ISOLATION

Isolation means keeping Covid-positive people away from other hospital. Quarantine separates the patient's close contacts from home till they test negative or go 14 days without symptoms

You can self-isolate at home, if...

- Very mild, pre-symptomatic or asymptomatic case
- House has separate rooms for patient and family
- A caregiver is available round-the-clock. However,



- People over 60 years, and those with hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, chronic lung/liver/kidney diseases and cerebrovascular diseases are allowed home isolation only on a doctor's advice

you can home-isolate without a caregiver by taking a Covid home care package from a hospital

➤ Immune-compromised patients – transplant recipients, cancer patients and those with HIV – cannot home-isolate

Things you'll need at home to quarantine

➤ Food and household cleaning supplies for 14 days

➤ Prescription medicines, over-the-counter cough and cold medicines, and pain-relievers for 30 days

➤ Hand sanitiser

➤ Pulse oximeter

➤ Thermometer

➤ Surgical masks, which patients should change every 6-8 hours

➤ Betadine for

gargling twice a day

➤ Disposable plates, bowls and cutlery

➤ Disinfectant spray or wipes for sanitising frequently-touched surfaces

WHAT NOT TO DO

Steam inhalation: Pulmonologists say steam inhalation not only gives a false sense of safety but can harm the inner layers of the lungs. Essential oil-induced seizures (EOIS) are another big concern, so avoid adding eucalyptus oil and pain balm to water if you absolutely need to inhale steam

Hoarding oxygen: Patients need oxygen cylinders. If you have one, get an oxygen machine to use up the nitro



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