

What does the coronavirus do to your body? Everything to know about the infection process

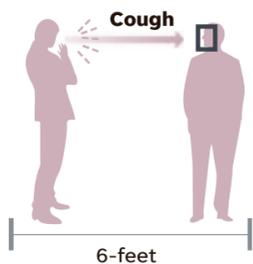
The World Health Organization and U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advise the public be watchful for fever, dry cough and shortness of breath, symptoms that follow contraction of the new coronavirus known as COVID-19.

From infection, it takes approximately five to 12 days for symptoms to appear. Here's a step-by-step look at what happens inside the body when it takes hold.

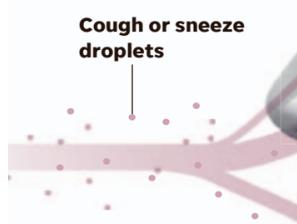
By Javier Zarracina and Adrianna Rodriguez/USA TODAY

Coronavirus infection

According to the CDC, the virus can spread person-to-person within 6 feet through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.



It's also possible for the virus to remain on a surface or object, be transferred by touch and enter the body through the mouth, nose or eyes.

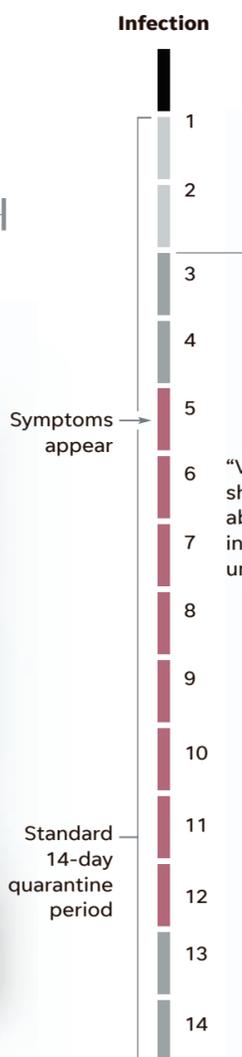


It can take two to 14 days for a person to develop symptoms after initial exposure to the virus.

Fever, cough and other symptoms

This first symptoms take place in the upper respiratory tract, which includes the nose, mouth, larynx and bronchi.

The patient begins to experience mild version of symptoms: dry cough, shortness of breath, fever and muscle pains, comparable to the flu.



"Viral shedding"—ability to infect others until cured

Symptoms often start in the back of the throat, with a dry cough

Shortness of breath

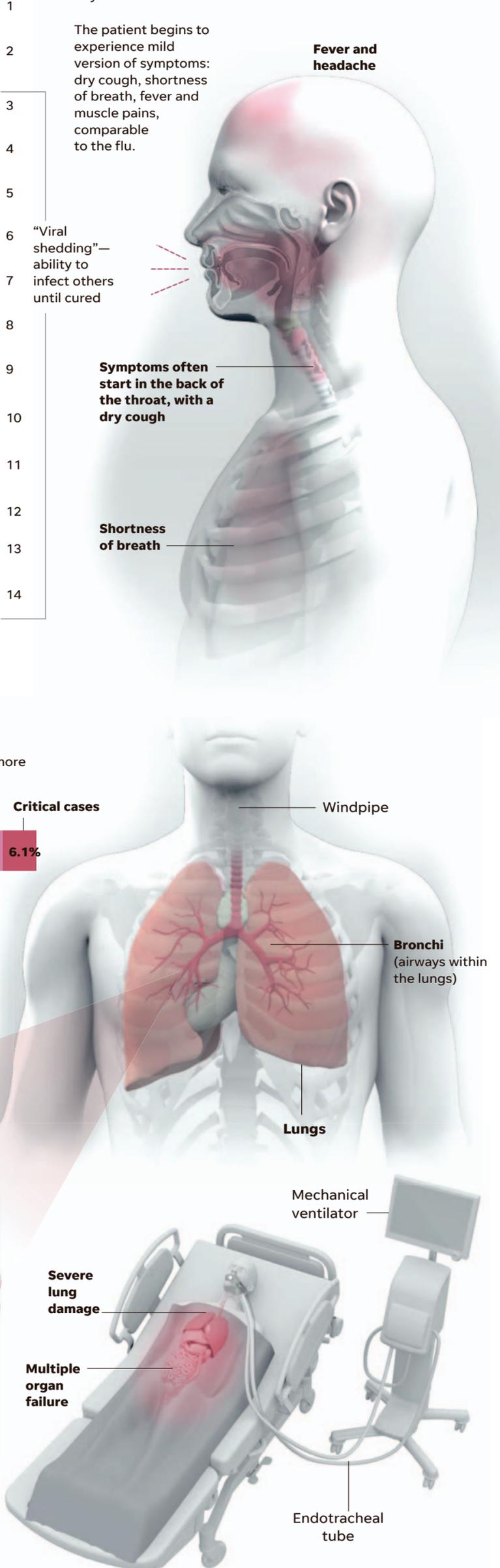
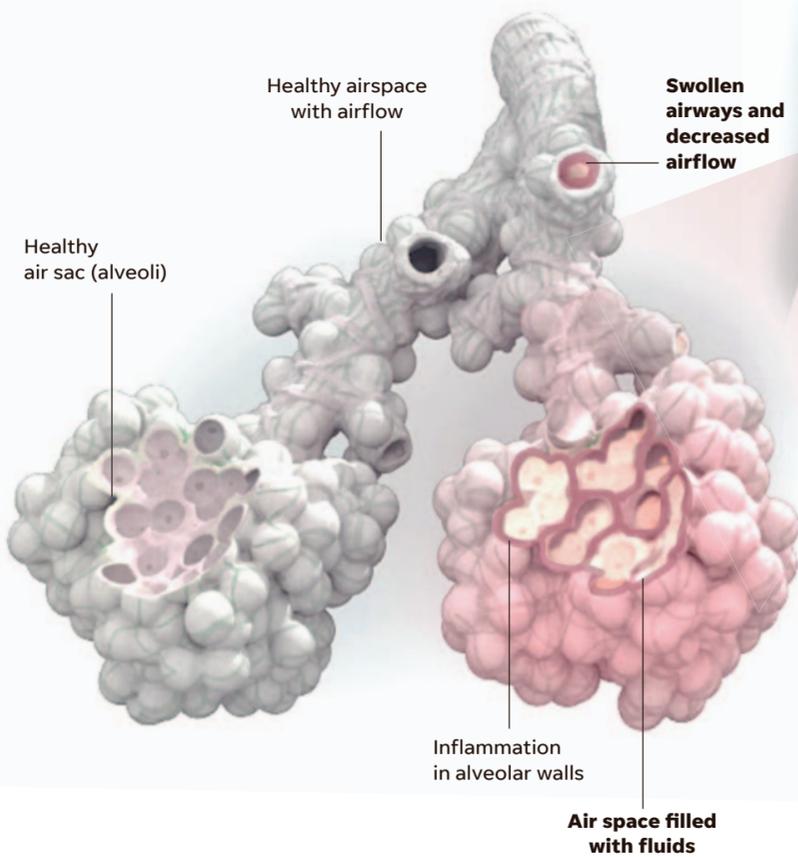
Fever and headache

More severe cases: pneumonia and autoimmune disease

The WHO reported last month about 80% of patients have a mild to moderate disease from infection. A case of "mild" COVID-19 includes a fever and cough more severe than the seasonal flu but usually does not require hospitalization.



As the virus continues to replicate and journeys further down the windpipe and into the lung, it can cause more respiratory problems like bronchitis and pneumonia.



Restricting oxygen to the bloodstream deprives other major organs of oxygen including the liver, kidney and brain. In a small number of severe cases that can develop into acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS), which requires a patient be placed on a ventilator to supply oxygen.

However, if too much of the lung is damaged and not enough oxygen is supplied to the rest of the body, respiratory failure could lead to organ failure and death.

SOURCE Johns Hopkins University; WHO; CDC; Dr. Martin S. Hirsch, senior physician in the Infectious Diseases Services at Massachusetts General Hospital.com; USA TODAY research

JAVIER ZARRACINA/USA TODAY