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December 18, 2023 – UPDATED*

PFF Coronavirus FAQs

To members of the pulmonary fibrosis community,

The Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation continues to monitor the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) and its spread throughout the United States. **People who have chronic medical issues, including those with pulmonary fibrosis, may be at [higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19](#)**. Public health officials recommend patients in the higher risk category should reduce the risk of being exposed to COVID-19.

To reduce the risk of severe COVID-19 infection, the [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) recommends the 2023-2024 updated COVID-19 vaccines: Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, or Novovax.

You should also follow these preventive actions:

- Improving indoor ventilation
- Getting tested for COVID-19 if you have symptoms or if you have been exposed
- Staying home if you have suspected or confirmed COVID-19
- Seeking treatment if you have COVID-19 and are at risk of getting very sick
- Avoiding contact with people who have suspected or confirmed COVID-19

Common Questions

What should I do if I have been exposed to someone with COVID-19?

If you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, you should get tested and follow the latest CDC guidance on [isolation](#). Do not go to your local emergency room for a COVID-19 test only.

If you are unvaccinated or vaccinated and immunosuppressed, exposed to COVID-19, and at high risk for severe illness from COVID-19, contact your physician early to discuss steps you can take to reduce your risk of becoming ill.

What should I do if I think I have been infected with COVID-19?

If you develop symptoms or think you have been exposed to COVID-19, take a [viral test](#) at home, in a laboratory, or at a testing site. Free at-home COVID-19 tests are available by mail at [COVIDtests.gov](#). **Contact your healthcare provider immediately if you test positive for COVID-19.**

How does COVID-19 impact patients with interstitial lung disease (ILD)?

Emerging studies indicate that ILD patients who are hospitalized with COVID-19 have worse outcomes than matched COVID-19 patients without ILD. (Source: <https://www.atsjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1164/rccm.202007-2794OC>).

It is important to note that more research is needed to gain a better understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on patients with ILD.

I am immunocompromised. How can I protect myself from COVID-19?

Individuals who have suppressed immune systems from medications or medical conditions and their caregivers should continue to take precautions to prevent infection from COVID-19.

Therefore, everyone who has a moderately or severely compromised immune system needs at least one dose of a 2023-2024 updated COVID-19 vaccine. [You may need more than one dose, depending on the number of doses you've previously received](#). Talk to your doctor about getting additional doses of an updated COVID-19 vaccine and any medication adjustments around the time of vaccination.

Can I prevent the virus from entering my portable oxygen concentrator (POC)?

The filters in POCs are not designed to filter viruses. Oxygen equipment should be cleaned, and filters replaced as specified by the manufacturer for routine maintenance. It is now more important than ever to clean and disinfect frequently touched objects, including POCs. Also, wash your hands frequently.

Should I wear a mask? What type should I use?

Masks can help protect you and others from COVID-19. [Wear a mask](#) with the best fit, protection and comfort for you. You can monitor the [COVID-19 admission levels](#) in your community to help determine when and where to wear a mask.

How can I get involved in a clinical trial related to COVID-19?

The [PFF Clinical Trial Finder](#) has been updated to include clinical trials related to COVID-19, in addition to PF-related clinical trials. Typing “COVID-19” in the “Keyword” filter of the PFF Clinical Trial Finder will show studies related to COVID-19. If you are interested in participating in any of these trials, contact the listed site coordinator for the trial via phone or email. You can also find clinical trials investigating COVID-19 on the website of the National Institutes of Health at <https://clinicaltrials.gov>.

Are there treatments for COVID-19?

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has authorized and approved [COVID-19 treatments](#) for patients experiencing symptoms at home, in the hospital, and for individuals who are at high risk for serious complications from COVID-19.

If you test positive for COVID-19, you should start treatment as soon as possible. Learn about the [Test to Treat](#) initiative which aims to help people quickly access antiviral treatments for COVID-19 at little to no cost.

Can COVID-19 lead to pulmonary fibrosis?

The impact of SARS-CoV-2 infection on the development of chronic and progressive lung disease is under study, and much remains unknown.

Pulmonary fibrosis (PF) or interstitial lung disease (ILD) has been reported in some patients following COVID-19 infection, however the rates of development of PF after severe, moderate, mild, or asymptomatic COVID-19 infection are undefined. Severe COVID-19 pneumonia with Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS) appears to present the highest risk for subsequent PF.

Post-acute sequelae of SARS-CoV-2 (PASC) is a term to describe a prolonged constellation of symptoms, including breathlessness and cough, that some individuals experience after COVID-19 illness. Treatment of PASC is being studied, and currently involves supportive care, symptom management, and treatment of serious complications.

In patients with a history of COVID-19, the diagnosis of PF is made in the same way as in other forms of PF: by evaluation of a patient's medical, environmental, and occupational history; a

physical examination; pulmonary function tests; a high-resolution CT scan; and sometimes, a lung biopsy.

What should I do if I had COVID-19 and have been diagnosed with pulmonary fibrosis?

Discuss with your doctor how he or she plans to follow your disease course. If your doctor is not affiliated with a post-COVID center, consider going to one in order to access to the most current care, treatments, and opportunities to participate in research. The PFF has published a fact sheet about [lung fibrosis resulting from COVID-19](#). The PFF also provides educational resources on supportive care including supplemental oxygen, pulmonary rehabilitation, pulmonary function tests and the PFF Care Center Network.

Will my anti-fibrotic treatment help prevent me from contracting COVID-19? Is the medication being used as a treatment for COVID-19?

While a tremendous amount of research and clinical trials for coronavirus treatments are underway, there is currently no clinical evidence that anti-fibrotic therapies approved to treat forms of pulmonary fibrosis are effective in preventing and/or treating patients infected with coronavirus. Several studies are investigating the use of anti-fibrotics approved for various forms of PF to treat patients who have developed lung fibrosis as a result of COVID-19. If you're interested in learning more, you can visit clinicaltrials.gov for a complete list of COVID-19 studies worldwide.

What is known about immunity to COVID-19 in those who were previously infected?

The latest research on COVID-19 indicates that people can continue to test positive by a PCR test for up to three months after diagnosis and not be infectious to others. However, if you have had COVID-19 and have not had an updated 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccine, you should still get a booster shot. Reinfection is less likely in the months after infection, and you may consider delaying a booster shot for up to 3 months after infection. In addition to getting fully vaccinated, those who have recovered from COVID-19 should continue to follow everyday preventive actions.
