

# COVID in 2024

Category: COVID Redux

written by Ellen Zhang | February 22, 2024

I still remember the days of peak pandemic when everyone was stocking up on masks, toilet paper and even hand sanitizer. Back then, all patients wore masks, physicians gowned up, and loved ones couldn't see their family members in the hospital. So many things have changed, with more patients being vaccinated, visiting hours loosened, and rarely do I reach for an N95. Even if I do reach for N95s, I can throw them away after one use without worrying that the hospital will run out of supplies.

When I enter the hospital, I grab a new mask and put it on since they're required during the winter season. After work, entering the grocery store, I reflexively take off my mask. Now, it seems that COVID is behind us and that things have returned to normal—or at least, a new normal.

Last month, when I got an email saying that I was exposed to COVID, I was caught by surprise. Immediately, my mind ran through countless questions. From which of my dozen patients I see in a day did I catch COVID? When might I start feeling the symptoms? If I end up positive, how do I protect those around me? Will I need to take off from work? Even as these questions run through my mind, I pick up my dozen COVID tests to start testing for the next several days.

Luckily, I didn't end up testing positive for COVID. However, weeks later, I did end up having an upper viral infection—not COVID—that kept me in bed for a few days. As colder days approach, I tell my patients to bundle up in coats and encourage them to keep warm (and safe) with a mask since you never know when you're one viral infection away from being sick.

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