

# COVID-19 COMPLICATIONS

While Covid-19 pandemic sweeps across the globe, it is important to understand the transmission and the effect of the virus which has made it a pandemic. Covid-19 belongs to the coronavirus family, which also includes the SARS virus (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) and MERS (Middle East Respiratory Symptoms) virus. The family of Coronavirus includes virus strains that cause the common cold and flu.

It has been found that Covid-19 is a close relative of SARS. SARS is a novel type of virus that was reported in 2007, and like most SARS viruses, Covid-19 affects the respiratory tract in humans. The infection starts off with mild flu-like symptoms or no symptoms, and further progress to severe symptoms.

Covid-19 primarily infects the lungs in the affected individuals and in severe cases causes death due to ARDS and pneumonia. It is important to remember that it does not lead to ARDS and pneumonia in all the cases, which is an occurrence in most severe cases.

In the majority of the cases i.e. 80% will exhibit mild symptoms, 14% will have pneumonia, 5% will suffer from septic shock and organ failure (mostly respiratory failure), and in 2% cases, it will be fatal.

Some of the primary symptoms to look for in a Covid-19 infected person are fever, dizziness, breathlessness, headache, dry cough (eventually result in phlegm) and in a few cases loss in smell and taste. A few cases have also reported diarrhoea and fatigue.

So while a person infected with Covid-19 can be cured, it is important to understand that the factors that lead to fatality, include underlying illnesses (hypertension, diabetes, cardiac problems, respiratory issues) and individuals who are on immune-suppressing medications. In older individuals, the risk is higher, as the immunity decreases with age and they have a higher disposition for other illnesses.

Another important aspect of understanding Covid-19 is its effect on the body system, especially the lungs.

Before understanding the severity of Covid-19 infection, it is important to understand the different stages/categories of Covid-19 infection.

First category: These individuals are infected by the virus, but act as carriers but may not exhibit the symptoms. These individuals are at a higher risk of spreading the virus as they might be oblivious to its presence.

Second category: Individuals with mild fever, cough, headache, or possible conjunctivitis. This is due to an infection in the upper respiratory tract.