



Written by [Dennis Behrendt](#) on June 17, 2020

## Good News: Up to 45 Percent of People With COVID-19 Have No Symptoms

Findings from the Scripps Research Institute suggest that as many as 45 percent of those infected with COVID-19 are free of symptoms.



That's great news, proving that for many people the virus that causes COVID-19 is not that dangerous. The bad news, however, is that this statistic will be used to justify invasions of privacy as part of totalitarian schemes to track Americans who will now be viewed as a mass of "typhoid Mary" asymptomatic carriers of the pandemic plague.

The [paper describing the results](#) obtained by the study was published in the journal *Annals of Internal Medicine*. Therein, the researchers described their method of conducting their study.

"From 19 April through 26 May 2020, using the keywords *COVID-19*, *SARS-CoV-2*, *symptoms*, and *asymptomatic*, we periodically searched the published medical literature using the PubMed service maintained by the U.S. National Library of Medicine of the National Institutes of Health. We also searched for unpublished manuscripts using the bioRxiv and medRxiv services operated by Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory. In addition, we searched for news reports using Google and monitored relevant information shared on Twitter."

The researchers turned up some eyebrow-raising results. In one case they found a "96% rate of asymptomatic infection among thousands of inmates in 4 state prison systems." Even the researchers were befuddled by this, openly wondering in their paper why "might the asymptomatic infection rate in this setting be so anomalously high?"

One possible answer, they theorized, might be immunity gained in the population from exposure to other betacoronaviruses.

"One plausible factor could be cross-immunity imparted by the betacoronaviruses HCoV-OC43 and HCoV-HKU1, which has been proposed as a mitigating factor in the spread of SARS-CoV-2," they suggested. "According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, HCoV-HKU1 was active across the United States from late November 2019 through mid-February 2020. In a locked-down congregate setting like a prison, it seems possible that contagious respiratory viruses could spread rapidly, so it would be interesting to do a serosurvey for antibodies to these betacoronaviruses."

While it is assuredly good news that this research supports the idea that most people do not have to fear health consequences from exposure to the virus, the researchers point out that, in their opinion, the results obtained by the study underscore the need for aggressive statist interventions.

"In countries like the United States that have been hardest hit by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, it has been apparent for some time that the amount of testing must be significantly and rapidly increased —



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perhaps by an order of magnitude or more,” they write. “With this new knowledge that a large proportion of those infected with SARS-CoV-2 have no symptoms, the urgency for more testing becomes even greater.”

Moreover, they note, people should be tested repeatedly.

“The difficulty of distinguishing asymptomatic persons from those who are merely presymptomatic is a stumbling block. To be clear, the asymptomatic individual is infected with SARS-CoV-2 but will never develop symptoms of COVID-19. In contrast, the presymptomatic individual is similarly infected but eventually will develop symptoms. The simple solution to this conundrum is longitudinal testing — that is, repeated observations of the individual over time.”

This, of course, is not really feasible, even in a thoroughgoing police state. Recognizing this, the authors of the study make other suggestions.

“Because of the high risk for silent spread by asymptomatic persons, it is imperative that testing programs include those without symptoms. To supplement conventional diagnostic testing, which is constrained by capacity, cost, and its one-off nature, innovative tactics for public health surveillance, such as crowdsourcing digital wearable data and monitoring sewage sludge, might be helpful.”

Commenting for a Scripps news release, study co-author Eric Topol, M.D., [emphasized the need](#) for massively increased testing.

“The silent spread of the virus makes it all the more challenging to control,” said Topol, who is founder and director of the Scripps Research Translational Institute and professor of Molecular Medicine at Scripps Research. “Our review really highlights the importance of testing. It’s clear that with such a high asymptomatic rate, we need to cast a very wide net, otherwise the virus will continue to evade us.”



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