

## THE EPOCH TIMES



Health care workers tend to a patient with COVID-19 at Providence St. Mary Medical Center in Apple Valley, Calif., on Jan. 11, 2021. (Ariana Drehsler/AFP/Getty Images)

PREMIUM **SYMPTOMS & LONG COVID**

# People Who Contract COVID-19 at Higher Risk of Mental Health Problems: Study

By [Zachary Stieber](#) | February 19, 2022 Updated: February 21, 2022

**A** Print

People who get [COVID-19](#) are more likely to suffer from [mental health](#) problems, according to a newly published study.

Researchers found that people with COVID-19 who didn't die were at a 60 percent higher risk of any mental health diagnosis or prescription, with problems including sleep disorders, depression, and neurocognitive decline.

People with COVID-19, for instance, were 36 percent more likely to be prescribed opioids when compared to a control group. People with COVID-19 were also 24 percent more likely to suffer from sleep disorders.

“The risks were evident even among people who did not need hospitalization during the acute phase of SARS-CoV-2 infection,” Dr. Ziyad Al-Aly, director of the Clinical Epidemiology Center at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Saint Louis Health Care System, and one of the researchers, wrote on Twitter.

SARS-CoV-2 causes COVID-19. It’s also known as the [CCP \(Chinese Communist Party\) virus](#).

Researchers reached the findings by analyzing data from VA health care databases.

They arranged three cohorts. One group was comprised of patients who sought care from the agency’s health system between March 1, 2020, and Jan. 15, 2021, tested positive for COVID-19, and survived at least 30 days from the positive test. The patients were followed through Nov. 30, 2021.

Another group consisted of patients who used the same system but didn’t test positive for COVID-19. Patients were followed for similar periods of time as the infected cohort.

A third group was assembled to provide a historical control cohort. They sought care from the system before the pandemic.

Comparisons of the infected group with the contemporary control group and the historical control cohort resulted in similar numbers.

Patients with COVID-19 most at risk of experiencing mental health problems were those hospitalized during the initial, or acute, phase of the disease. But researchers found even people with COVID-19 who weren’t admitted to hospitals were more likely to suffer from mental health issues.

“Our findings show an increased risk of mental health disorders in people with covid-19. Evidence also suggests that people with mental health disorders are at increased risk of becoming infected with SARS-CoV-2 and having serious outcomes. This likely suggests the putative existence of a bidirectional connection in that mental health disorders might predispose someone to covid-19 and that covid-19 itself might lead to adverse mental health manifestations. A better understanding of the interaction of mental health disorders both at risk for and sequela of covid-19 is needed,” the researchers wrote.

The results of the observational study were [published in the British Journal of Medicine](#).

Limitations of the study included the demographic composition of the cohorts being mostly older white men, which might limit the application to the general public.

The research was funded by the VA and an award from the American Society of Nephrology.

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