

Coronavirus death rate is higher for those with chronic illnesses

15 June 2020, by Lindsey Tanner



In this April 20, 2020, file photo, resident physician Leslie Bottrell stands outside a room at an Intensive Care Unit as a nurse suctioned the lungs of a COVID-19 patient at St. Joseph's Hospital in Yonkers, N.Y. A U.S. government report says death rates are 12 times higher for coronavirus patients with chronic illnesses than for others who become infected. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report Monday, June 15 highlights the dangers posed by these conditions. They include heart disease, diabetes and chronic lung ailments, such as asthma or emphysema. (AP Photo/John Minchillo, File)

Death rates are 12 times higher for coronavirus patients with chronic illnesses than for others who become infected, a new U.S. government report says.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report released Monday highlights the dangers posed by [heart disease](#), diabetes and lung ailments. These are the top three [health problems](#) found in COVID-19 patients, the report suggests.

The report is based on 1.3 million laboratory-confirmed coronavirus cases reported to the agency from January 22 through the end of May.

Information on health conditions was available for just 22% of the patients. It shows that 32% had heart-related disease, 30% had diabetes and 18% had [chronic lung disease](#), which includes asthma and emphysema.

Among patients with a chronic illness, about 20% died compared with almost 2% of those who were otherwise healthy. Virus patients with a chronic condition were also six times more likely to be hospitalized—46% versus almost 8%.

People with chronic disease "are much more likely to suffer severe effects of COVID-19, but we can't lose sight of the fact that previously healthy people can also become very ill and even die as well," Dr. Leana Wen, an emergency physician and public health specialist at George Washington University, said in a statement.

Race and ethnicity data, available for just under half of patients, show 36% were white, 33% Hispanic, 22% black, 4% Asian and about 1% American Indian. Though the numbers are incomplete, they echo other reports that found minorities have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

Overall, 14 % of patients were hospitalized and 5% died based on available data. Among patients aged 80 and up who died, half had a [chronic illness](#).

Roughly equal numbers of men and women were infected, but men were more likely to have severe cases, the report found.

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