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Study Suggests People Who Got COVID-19 Protected for Months

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People who have had COVID-19 are unlikely to get the disease again for at least six months after their first infection, new research suggests.

Researchers studied 12,219 British healthcare workers involved in treating people infected with the new coronavirus. COVID-19 is the disease caused by that virus.

The findings could be important for tens of millions of people worldwide who have been infected, researchers at the University of Oxford said.

“This is really good news, because we can be **confident** that, at least in the short term, most people who get COVID-19 won’t get it again,” said David Eyre. He was one of the leaders of the study.

Rare cases of re-infection had caused concern that **immunity** from the virus might not last and that recovered patients might get sick again.

But the results of the study suggest cases of reinfection are likely to remain extremely rare. The study was carried out on healthcare workers who are among those at highest risk of getting COVID-19.

“Being infected with COVID-19 does offer protection against re-infection for most people for at least six months,” Eyre said. “We found no new **symptomatic** infections” in any of the workers who had tested **positive** for antibodies.

The study is part of a major employee testing program. It covered a 30-week period between April and November 2020. The results have not yet been studied and confirmed by other scientists but were published early on the website MedRxiv.

During the study, 89 of 11,052 healthcare workers without antibodies got a new infection with symptoms. However, none of the 1,246 workers with antibodies got a symptomatic infection.

The workers with antibodies were also less likely to test positive for COVID-19 without symptoms, the researchers said. Seventy-six of them without antibodies tested positive, compared to three with antibodies. Those three are all well and did not get COVID-19 symptoms, they added.

Eyre told Reuters news agency that the researchers would keep watching the workers carefully “to see how long protection lasts.” And they will watch to see whether an earlier infection affects the severity of a new infection.

I’m Alice Bryant.

Reuters news agency reported this story. Alice Bryant adapted it for Learning English. Mario Ritter, Jr. was the editor.

Words in This Story

confident *-adj.* have the belief that something will happen or is true

immunity *-n.* protection from being affected by infectious disease

symptomatic *-adj.* showing that a disease is present, showing signs of disease

positive *-adj.* showing that a chemical, substance or germ is present