

COVID-19: Top science stories of the week, from single shot vaccine results to asymptomatic spread

Confirmation that asymptomatic people transmit COVID-19

A new study published in [JAMA Internal Medicine](#) confirms that those not showing symptoms of COVID-19 can still transmit the virus. Until now evidence that asymptomatic people can pass on the disease has been anecdotal but a team in South Korea have shown that people without symptoms carry just as much virus in their nose, throat and lungs as those with symptoms, and for almost as long.

The study analysed samples taken between March 6 and March 26 from 193 symptomatic and 110 asymptomatic people isolated at a community treatment centre in Cheonan, South Korea. Of the initially asymptomatic patients, 89 — roughly 30% of them — appeared healthy throughout, while 21 developed symptoms.

The results of the South Korean study are in line with [comments](#) made by Anthony Fauci, who's leading the response to COVID-19 in the United States. "The good news about COVID-19 is that about 40 percent of the population have no symptoms when they get infected," Fauci said. "But even though you are likely not going to get symptoms, you are propagating the outbreak, which means that you're going to infect someone, who will infect someone, who then will have a serious consequence."

The fact that SARS-CoV-2 is now known to spread through those not showing symptoms, adds to the difficulty of identifying and isolating infected people. Expanding testing to populations not showing symptoms could be an effective way of combating this and help to contain the pandemic.