

UW-Madison: Badger Talks video on recovery and immunity

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After months of treating and researching COVID-19, doctors have learned more about how to help sick patients and what recovery looks like for most people. UW Health chief quality officer and UW School of Medicine and Public Health emergency physician Jeff Pothof shares in this Badger Talks video what we now know about the course of the disease.

A few medications have shown promise for treating seriously ill patients in the hospital. They include the anti-viral remdesivir and the steroid dexamethasone. These medications have given doctors new options to prevent or mitigate the worst symptoms of COVID-19. At the same time, doctors have discovered that placing patients on their stomach can improve their breathing without having to rely on a ventilator. These treatment options mean better outcomes for patients.

But most people with COVID-19 will never be in the hospital because they experience a milder form of the disease. Most patients have cold- or flu-like symptoms and a lot of fatigue that clears up in a couple weeks. We've learned that some fraction of patients experience lingering effects, like fatigue and shortness of breath, even after they're no longer actively battling an infection. Doctors are still researching the extent of these longer-term health effects.

And now with several months of more data, it seems that infection with COVID-19 does provide protection against re-infection. But it remains unclear how long that immunity might last or how complete it might be, so following public health guidelines could still help recovered patients avoid getting sick again.