

Infographic: From head to toe, coronavirus affects the body in unpredictable ways

Today, there is widespread recognition the novel coronavirus is far more unpredictable than a simple respiratory virus. Often it attacks the lungs, but it can also strike anywhere from the brain to the toes.

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[It attacks the heart](#), weakening its muscles and disrupting its critical rhythm. [It savages kidneys](#) so badly some hospitals have run short of dialysis equipment. It crawls along the nervous system, destroying taste and smell and occasionally reaching the brain. [It creates blood clots that can kill with sudden efficiency](#) and inflames blood vessels throughout the body.

It can begin with a few symptoms or none at all, then days later, squeeze the air out of the lungs without warning. [It picks on the elderly](#), [people weakened by previous disease](#), and, disproportionately, the obese. [It harms men more than women](#), but there are also signs it complicates pregnancies.

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Trying to define a pathogen in the midst of an ever-spreading epidemic is fraught with difficulties. Experts say it will be years until it is understood how the disease damages organs and how medications, genetics, diets, lifestyles and distancing impact its course.

[screen shot doctors keep discovering new ways the coronavirus attacks the body](#)
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