

## When we get COVID-19 under control, here's what it might turn into

The coronavirus is here to stay, but once most adults are immune — following natural infection or vaccination — the virus [will be no more of a threat than the common cold](#), according to a study published in the journal Science on [January 12].

The virus is a grim menace now because it is an unfamiliar pathogen that can overwhelm the adult immune system, which has not been trained to fight it. That will no longer be the case once everyone has been exposed to either the virus or vaccine.

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Eventually, the study suggests, the virus will be of concern only in children younger than 5, subjecting even them to mere sniffles — or no symptoms at all.

In other words, the coronavirus will become “endemic,” a pathogen that circulates at low levels and only rarely causes serious illness.

“The timing of how long it takes to get to this sort of endemic state depends on how quickly the disease is spreading, and how quickly vaccination is rolled out,” said Jennie Lavine, a postdoctoral fellow at Emory University in Atlanta, who led the study.

“So really, the name of the game is getting everyone exposed for the first time to the vaccine as quickly as possible.”

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