



National Indian Health Board  
**NATIONAL TRIBAL  
COVID-19 RESPONSE**

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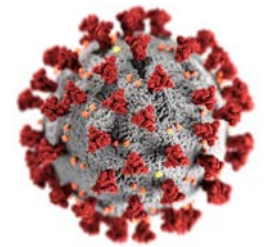
## **COVID 19 and Re-infection**

### **What is Re-infection?**

In medical terms, re-infection happens when an infection occurs again following a recovery from an infection of the same type. For example, a re-infection occurs if a person has had a certain strain of the influenza (flu) virus, but then later gets sick from the same strain again.

### **Can a Person be Re-infected with the Coronavirus Causing COVID-19?**

Scientists are investigating probable causes for possible COVID-19 re-infections. Recently, in South Korea, it was reported by the Korea Center for Disease Control and Prevention that more than 260 individuals tested positive for SARS-Cov-2 after having recovered from COVID-19, but was later determined that they in fact did not have the virus still. Rather it was fragments of the previous virus being found in the tests producing a positive result. While the ultimate findings from this line of research could impact how we continue to battle the novel coronavirus, some good news is emerging from this research. Out of the individuals who initially appeared to have been re-infected with COVID-19, approximately 44% displayed minimal symptoms. Additionally, initial reports seem to show that an individual who has retested positive for the novel coronavirus may not be as infectious.



### **Why Some Individuals May Become or Appear to be Re-infected with the Novel Coronavirus?**

Scientists are still studying the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) that causes COVID-19, and therefore do not have all of the answers yet the biological processes that could lead to re-infection, antibody protection, or relapse. But here are some possible answers being explored.

- There could errors or inconsistencies in the testing methodologies and processes.
- The possibility that virus has been re-activated within an individual or was not completely shed before being considered full recovered
- The possibility of mutation changes in the virus that are not detected by the tests when conducted
- The antibodies produced by the body when the novel coronavirus is present may not provide long-term protection against the viral infection.
- An individual may still test positive for having COVID-19 since residual pieces of the virus remains inside of the body.

### **Takeaway Messages**

Even if you have recovered from COVID-19, or are close to a person that has, preventative measures must still be followed (such as self-quarantine, social/physical distancing, and using face coverings). Re-infection could contribute to a second wave of COVID-19 illnesses.

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