



A COVID Christmas

It's the gift that nobody wants to give or get

I got COVID for Christmas. Apparently it's a pretty popular gift this year. It isn't what I wanted, but it's what I got. I don't even know who gave it to me. I can't return it, and I certainly don't want to re-gift it to anyone.

I have heard a lot about it over the last two years, but I still didn't know what to do with it when I got it. It didn't come with any instructions, and from what I've heard, they change frequently anyway. In fact, over

the course of my illness, the instructions changed, and then I heard they were on the verge of changing again. I went online to look for instructions. It turns out there are many. Every state seems to have a website devoted to COVID-19, as do many municipalities, universities, medical centers and media outlets from all around the world.

It seems the best place to turn for information is Uncle Sam. The government has many



agencies dealing with the pandemic, so there are many sites dealing with different aspects of it. If you're just looking for advice on how to find out if you have COVID and what to do about it, [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) is a good site. There's a prominent link high on the home page that takes you to the COVID-19 section. It's full of information on vaccines, testing, masking, traveling and treating the illness. The information is gathered and vetted by experts and updated as the situation changes. A common complaint is that the government keeps changing the rules. That's true because we are still learning about this virus, and new variants continue to emerge. Smart people change their strategy when new information emerges.

For many, COVID has affected more than just their health. It may have cost them their job, housing or child care or impacted their business. [USA.gov/coronavirus](https://www.usa.gov/coronavirus) is a good site for one-stop shopping on all things COVID. The site is full of information on different aspects of the pandemic response as well as links to other sites for more in-depth coverage. The government has many programs to help support people who have been adversely affected. This site has information on all of them. There are sections on the Advance Child Tax Credit, stimulus payments, unemployment benefits, travel rules and tips, financial assistance for food, housing and utilities, small business aid, scams and, of course, health information. Some of these programs have ended or are ending soon. The site lets you know what options are still available.

Both of these sites are designed to provide information. They're functional, easy to navigate and heavy on text. Don't expect awesome images, videos

and graphics, but do expect to do a lot of reading.

I shouldn't make light of this disease. It has caused tremendous pain to millions of people all over the world. I was fortunate. I've been fully vaccinated, so my symptoms were mild and passed quickly. The worst part was having to isolate for a week. It disrupts every aspect of your life — no hanging out or dining with family, no New Year's Eve party, no going to the store, gym, work or anywhere. I may have been able to avoid it if I was more diligent with masking and social distancing, but I got complacent. I've been socializing as if the pandemic was over, but it's still very much with us. If you don't want to disrupt your life for two weeks in a best-case scenario, or go to the hospital or morgue in a worst-case scenario, get your shots, mask up when appropriate and exercise common sense.

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