

Why The Transgender Population May Be More Susceptible To COVID-19

By Ann Thompson • Jul 13, 2020

The pandemic is exposing an increased socioeconomic vulnerability for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) populations, [according to a new survey](#). For transgender people, it may come down to a variety of factors, says an University of Cincinnati doctor.

Dr. Sarah Pickle can't track the entire Tri-State transgender community to see who is having COVID-19 symptoms and who is testing positive. But, she says, "Of the patients I have who have called me with COVID symptoms - who've been confirmed COVID and by testing or assigned COVID, based on symptoms - most of them are my transgender folks."

Seventy-five percent of her patients are transgender, gender non-binary or gender diverse, including Kaeden Kass.

He contracted the coronavirus in early April and was so sick he had trouble walking from the living room to the kitchen in a three-room house.

Kass has an autoimmune disease that causes severe back pain. "I have to believe that was one of the factors that led to me getting COVID and getting it so early," he says. "I just have a weaker immune system because of that."

In fact, one in five transgender adults have at least one chronic illness according to the [National Center for Transgender Equality](#).

Kass's partner Will Bastien also contracted COVID-19 and so did Zoey Peach. She's a health educator who is transgender. Peach had COVID-19 in March.

Peach says a large segment of trans people are scared of going to the doctor. "They've reported in a number of national surveys they have experienced discrimination in a health care setting. So they may not seek health care when they were sick or for testing."

Because large percentages are not going to a physician, Dr. Pickle says underlying health factors may get missed and that is putting them at greater risk for the coronavirus. She also says they have less access to insurance, stable employment and housing, and those are all factors related to health.