

# It Started with A Cough



My symptoms started March 6th. The coughing. I coughed almost constantly for the first three days. First thing I did was check my supply of cold pills and started taking them. I also downed Robitussin DM with great enthusiasm. The cough medicine soothed my throat temporarily, but nothing stopped the coughing. The hacking. My lungs did not burn. They just felt full. My breathing was pretty shallow. I sequestered myself in the den. I wanted my husband to get some sleep. I didn't get more than a wink.

By the second night I thought about going to the ER. I thought about it really hard but decided to tough it out. This was so early on in the pandemic that COVID-19 didn't really hit my radar.

I just kept thinking about the fact that if I had a cold why wasn't my nose running? I had no snot at all. I had no fever but the shivering was relentless. For two days I stayed under quilts and just shook; wondering when it would stop. Instead of a fever, I did have waves of warmth that went up and down my neck. Those felt more like hot flashes than a constant temperature.

I was exhausted and not just because I got no sleep. I was just

dragging. I'd shuffle around my apartment with my bed pillow under my arm. I did manage to watch a movie one day, but I'm surprised my husband could hear it over my coughing.

Sunday, I started investigating urgent care clinics. By Monday I went to a walk-in clinic. It took less than five seconds of listening to my lungs for the nurse practitioner to declare that I had an acute respiratory infection. He prescribed steroids and antibiotics. (We have to remember there was no coronavirus advancing curve at that point. The discussion was still about what was happening in China, Italy and maybe a little about Washington state). I dutifully took the antibiotics and the steroids, but they basically did nothing. I had a false sense that I was getting better because I didn't cough quite as much. I started sleeping in the bedroom again. The most scary part was waking up in the middle of the night choking. I was choking and gasping for air. I had to sit up in bed to get control of my breathing but then it would calm down.

I asked the clinic for more steroids and antibiotics when mine ran out. They told me, "No more drugs. Just hydrate a lot, sleep a lot, and ride this out."

I tried to go to work a few times. I stayed away from everyone, but it didn't last long. Thank goodness for Jessica. She held the fort down and carried on without me. For the first five or six days I had no sense of appetite or smell. The thought of eating anything warm made me nauseous. I survived on a few little peanut butter sandwiches made with one piece of low carb bread. And ice water. Lots of ice water. Then the weird headaches started. With the first one I thought I was having a stroke. I was really scared. It started behind my left ear with a pulsating throb. It felt like my carotid artery had a clog. I could feel this painful cluster trying to work its way up my head. I had to lay down. That's when I REALLY considered an

ambulance. I was chicken though. Enough days had passed that the news was starting to build, and I was afraid to go to the ER. After about an hour the really scary pain passed. The cluster of pain had moved above my left eyebrow. I had suffered for years from migraines and I knew this was not that kind of pain. This was different. It happened again on Saturday and the next Sunday.

Monday, I called my doctor in Chicago and got an emergency appointment for telemedicine (I have not found a doctor in Chattanooga yet and my Chicago doctor knows me well). He spent 30 minutes asking me questions and going over my symptoms. I ended up telling the story to him much the same way I am telling you. My doctor has been treating lots of people who have COVID-19 in Chicago. Most of those cases he is treating with telemedicine too. At the end of our conversations he said, "I am more than 95% sure you had COVID-19."

*Bringing you up to date...* My coughing has mostly subsided. I have a short burst of cough probably 20-30 times a day. I sound sort of like a little barking dog. My heart flutters some days. The doc said that was pretty common too. He also said most folks are taking 6 or more weeks to get over this. I'm six weeks in. I found out this morning that they are doing testing here now. I called the Hamilton County Health Department. I'd like to get an antibody test to know for sure that I've had it. They don't have those yet.

So, I am acting like I didn't have it; just out of an abundance of caution. I wear my mask faithfully and I am still working from home in no hurry to get back to my offices. Since they don't really know if you build up antibodies to stay disease-free for any period, I'm okay with this. I'm locked down and adapting. I just thought you might like to read a story from someone who's had the experience I had. Assuming I did have it,

I feel lucky to have had what could be considered a pretty mild case.

Cheers,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Zola". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

P. S. People ask me how I got it. I really have no clue but for now I'm blaming the handle on the grocery cart.