

Temperature checks for COVID-19 can be misleading in AZ heat

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PHOENIX (3TV/CBS5) -- Temperature checks are considered a first line of defense with COVID-19, since a fever is a primary symptom.

However, one Valley medical expert warns that temperature reading doesn't necessarily tell the whole story, especially in the Arizona heat.

As Arizona lessens the shelter-in-place guidelines, you might run into businesses doing temperature checks at the door, assessing the temps of their employees and guests. "If that was the answer, I would just do that in the emergency department, just screen everybody for a temperature and be done with it," said Dr. Frank Lovecchio of Valleywise Health Medical Center.

But diagnosing COVID-19 is not that simple. "Unfortunately, as we know 80-85% of patients who have COVID-19 are asymptomatic. Those are the ones we worry about the most, right? Those are responsible for over 50% of spreading it to people," said Lovecchio. And the Arizona heat presents another challenge for accurate temperature readings.

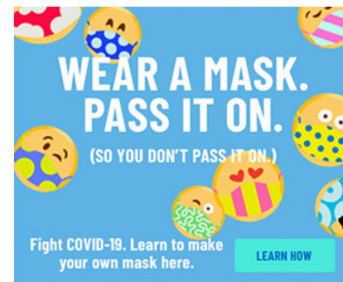
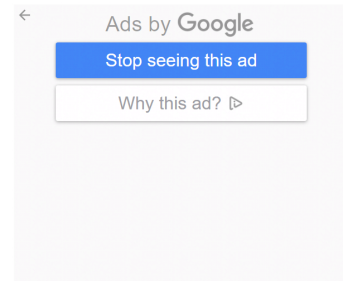
"When I take an infrared temperature on you it takes the temperature on your skin and what we are more concerned with is your core temperature and what's going on inside your body," said Lovecchio. "Most people don't have symptoms, so we recommend this just be a screening tool that if you do have a temperature you ask further questions at that time."

Dr. Lovecchio says that before being sent home, employees may want a second temperature reading once they've had a chance to cool off. He also recommends everyone exercise caution when venturing out. "I would discourage people from coming close to someone or being close to someone in public without a mask on." He suggests you continue to create a minimum distance of 6 feet outdoors and increase that space as much as possible indoors where air is shared.

"I don't know how this gym thing will work out," said Lovecchio. "I think if we see people working out in a fitness room together, that seems like a catastrophe waiting to happen right now." He says there is hope but we need to get a vaccine before we can resemble normal that will take a year or so.

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