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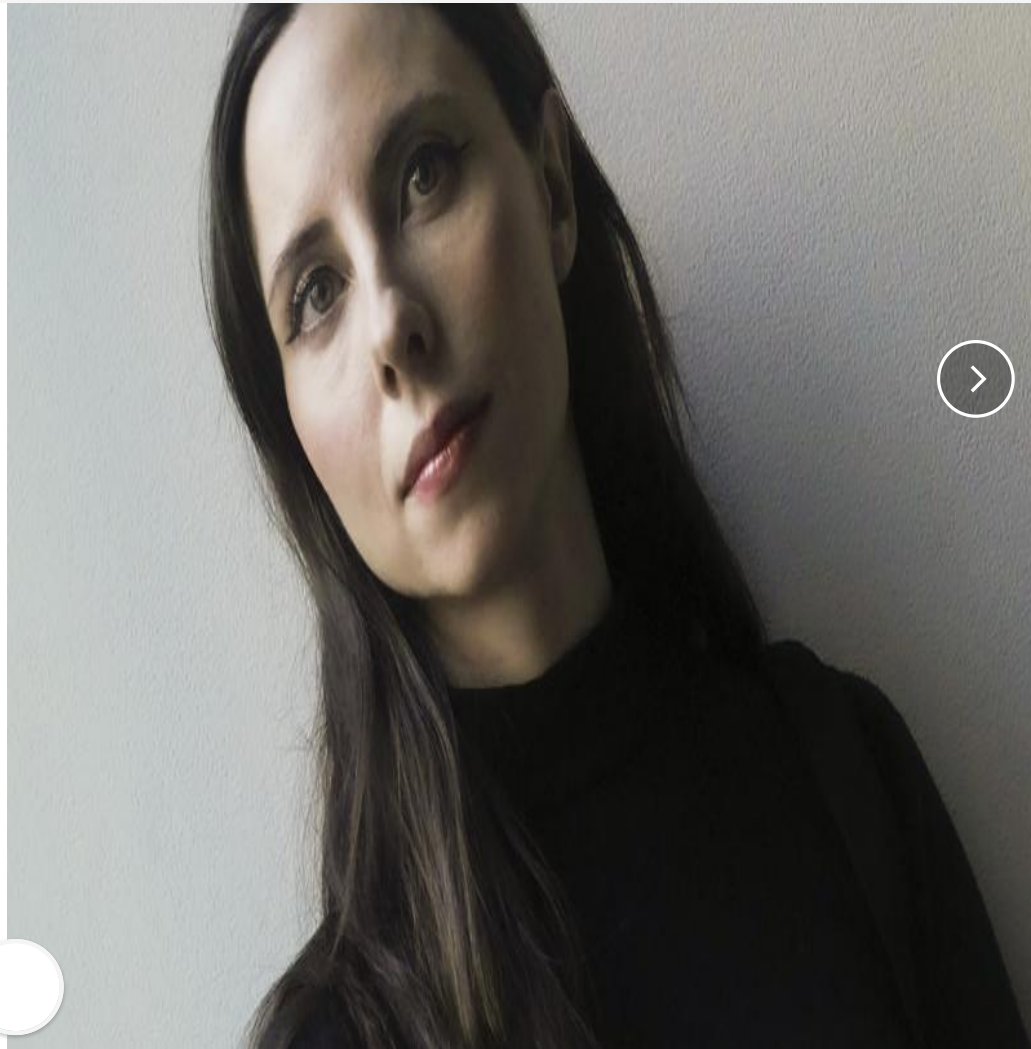
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# A viral reprise: When COVID-19 strikes again and again

AURA UNGAR July 1, 2022

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March 2020. Last December. And again this

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“I’m bummed to know that I might forever just get infected,” said the 31-year-old singer, who is vaccinated and boosted. “I don’t want to be getting sick every month or every two months.”

But medical experts warn that repeat infections are getting more likely as the pandemic drags on and the virus evolves – and some people are bound to get hit more than twice. Emerging research suggests that could put them at higher risk for health problems.

There’s no comprehensive data on people getting COVID-19 more than twice, although some states collect information on reinfections in general. New York, for example, reports around 277,000 reinfections out of 5.8 million total infections during the



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Several public figures have recently been

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MINISTER [JUSTIN TRUDEAU](#) said they got COVID-19 for the second time, and [U.S. Sen. Roger Wicker](#) of Mississippi said he tested positive a third time. All reported being fully vaccinated, and Trudeau and Becerra said they'd gotten booster shots.

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come up with better defenses, we'll see much

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Why? Immunity from past infections and vaccination wanes over time, experts say, leaving people vulnerable.

Also, the virus has evolved to be more contagious. The risk of reinfection has been about seven times higher with omicron variants compared with when delta was most common, research out of the United Kingdom shows. Scientists believe the omicron mutants now causing the vast majority of U.S. cases are [particularly adept](#) at getting around immunity from vaccination or past infection, especially infection during the original omicron wave. U.S. health officials are mulling whether to modify boosters to better match recent changes in the coronavirus.

The first time Mancini got COVID-19, she

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months later that showed she had been  
infected

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we just knew that people were dying from it,”  
said Mancini. “We were really sick. I hadn’t  
been sick like that in a long time.”

She got vaccinated with Pfizer in the spring  
of 2021 and thought she was protected from  
another infection, especially since she was  
sick before. But though such “hybrid  
immunity” can provide strong protection, it  
doesn’t guarantee someone won’t get  
COVID-19 again.

Mancini’s second bout, which happened  
during the huge omicron wave, started with a  
sore throat. She tested negative at first, but  
still felt sick driving to a gig four hours away.  
So she ducked into a Walgreens and did a  
rapid test in her car. It was positive, she said,  
“so I just turned the car around and drove  
back to Manhattan.”

This bout proved milder with “the worst

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The most recent illness was milder still, causing sinus pressure, brain fog, a woozy

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home test and confirmed with a PCR test, hit despite her Moderna booster shot.

Mancini doesn't have any known health conditions that could put her at risk for COVID-19. She takes precautions like masking in the grocery store and on the subway. But she usually doesn't wear a mask on stage.

"I'm a singer, and I'm in these crowded bars and I'm in these little clubs, some of which don't have a lot of ventilation, and I'm just around a lot of people," said Mancini, who also plays accordion and percussion. "That's the price that I've paid for doing a lot throughout these past few years. It's how I make my living."

Scientists don't know exactly why some people get reinfected and others don't, but



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vaccination status and behavior. British

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younger or had a mild infection the first time.

Scientists also aren't sure how soon someone can get infected after a previous bout. And there's no guarantee each infection will be milder than the last.

"I've seen it go both ways," said Dr. Wesley Long, a pathologist at Houston Methodist. In general, though, breakthrough infections that happen after vaccination tend to be milder, he said.

Doctors said getting vaccinated and boosted is the best protection against severe COVID-19 and death, and there's some evidence it also lessens the odds of reinfection.

At this point, there haven't been enough documented cases of multiple reinfections "to really know what the long-term consequences are," said Dr. Peter Hotez, dean of Baylor University's tropical medicine





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U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, which hasn't yet been reviewed by scientific peers.

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outcomes and health problems such as lung issues, heart disorders and diabetes compared with a first infection. The risks were most pronounced when someone was ill with COVID-19, but persisted past the acute illness as well.

After Mancini's last bout, she dealt with dizziness, headaches, insomnia and sinus issues, though she wondered if that was more due to her busy schedule. In a recent week, she had 16 shows and rehearsals — and has no room for another COVID-19 reprise.

“It was not fun,” she said. “I don't want to have it again.”

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