

# Bill Gates on testing and self-isolation during the Covid-19 pandemic

In a [2015 TED Talk](#), following the containment of the Ebola virus in West Africa, philanthropist and Microsoft cofounder Bill Gates warned that "failure to prepare could allow the next epidemic to be dramatically more devastating".



Philanthropist and Microsoft cofounder Bill Gates

He'd said that there were three reasons Ebola did not spread more: the efforts of heroic health workers, the nature of the virus in that it does not spread through the air and is only really contagious when the sick show symptoms and are bedridden, and it was largely confined to rural areas.

"Next time, we might not be so lucky," he'd warned. "You can have a virus where people feel well enough while they're infectious that they get on a plane or they go to a market."

## Testing and self-isolation

Facing this exact scenario today, Gates, in a new TED Connects series in response to the Covid-19 crisis, highlights why testing and self-isolation are essential for humanity to persevere through this global pandemic.

"I think the most important thing to discuss today is that in the area of test, we're still not creating that capacity and applying it to the people most in need, and so we have health workers who are symptomatic who can't get a test, and so they don't know, should they go in or not go in, and yet we have lots of tests who being given to people who are not symptomatic.

"Testing has got to be organised, it's got to be prioritised, that is super, super urgent. The second thing is the isolation that various parts here in the US, some folks are doing that in a fairly strong way, and other parts not yet. It's very hard to do, it's tough on people, it's disastrous for the economy,

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation earlier this year committed \$100m toward the detection, isolation, and treatment of the Covid-19 virus.

The TED Connects series is hosted by Chris Anderson, head of TED, and Whitney Pennington Rodgers, TED's current affairs curator.

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