

How CDC's Chatbot Can Help You Self-Check for COVID-19

The cloud-based bot is scalable and uses AI capabilities to aid concerned users in the midst of the pandemic.

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The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) launched an [automated chatbot](#) to help concerned Americans self-check for coronavirus.

The Coronavirus Self-Checker is one of several online features that provide information and aid to Americans in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Along with fact sheets about symptoms, preparation, community mitigation and other resources, the chatbot makes recommended courses of action for users based on their reported age, location, gender and symptoms.

The chatbot stresses it does not provide a concrete diagnosis or prescribed treatment. Rather, it provides rapid assessments based on users' symptoms and risk factors to suggest if users should contact a medical provider or manage their illness at home.

"The purpose of the Coronavirus Self-Checker is to help you make decisions about seeking appropriate medical care," the chatbot said. "This system is not intended for the diagnosis or treatment of disease or other conditions, including COVID-19. This system is intended only for people who are currently located in the United States."

The CDC created the chatbot in partnership with Microsoft Azure's Healthcare Bot. As medical facilities and hospitals increasingly become overwhelmed with new cases, high demand in testing and other nascent emergencies from COVID-19, Microsoft stressed that the chatbot it created with the CDC can help lessen provider and clinician burden.

"Microsoft's Healthcare Bot service is one solution that uses artificial intelligence to help the CDC and other frontline organizations respond to these inquiries, freeing up doctors, nurses, administrators and other healthcare professionals to provide critical care to those who need it," Microsoft said in a blog post.

Microsoft said its bot has fielded more than a million messages per day from users concerned about COVID-19 infections.

Because Healthcare Bot is "a scalable Azure-based public cloud service," it allows organizations like the CDC to rapidly build and launch automated, customized bots for their websites and provides users "personalized access to health-related information through a natural conversation experience," Microsoft said.

The CDC and Microsoft are working to expand COVID-19 response bots by creating templates that will let users assess COVID-19 risk assessments based on CDC guidelines, COVID-19 clinical triage based on CDC protocols, up-to-date answers on COVID-19 questions and global metrics of the virus.

Earlier this month, Microsoft Bing launched a [COVID-19 Tracker](#) that provides updated statistics on the number of active, recovered and fatal cases of the novel coronavirus globally, as well as aggregated articles and information about the virus.

The cooperation between Microsoft and the CDC marks one of several ways private companies are collaborating with federal agencies to address the pandemic. Last week, President Donald Trump [announced his national emergency plan of action to address the COVID-19 outbreak](#), praising pharmaceutical organizations, private labs and tech companies in their willingness to aid in the nationwide response.

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