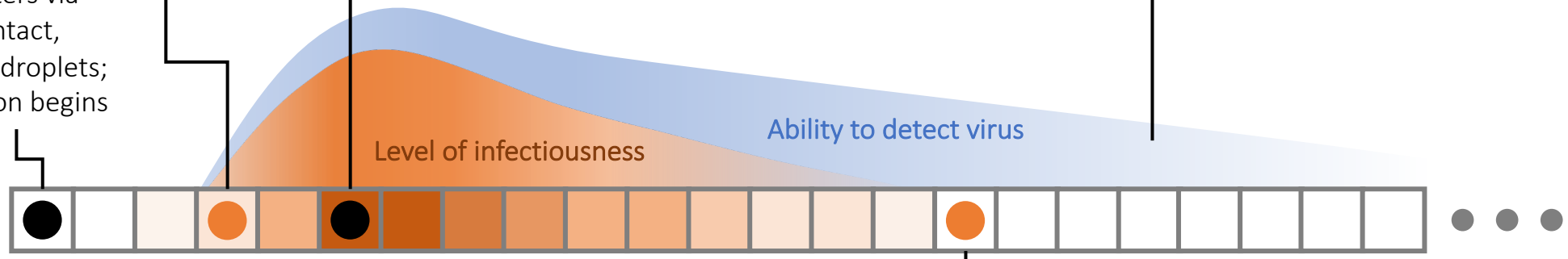
Stages of COVID-19

Exposure
Virus enters via close contact, typically droplets; replication begins

Infectious period starts
May become infectious 1-3 days before onset

Symptom Onset if symptomatic
- 2-14 days after exposure, typically 5 days
- Highest viral load around day of onset
- 6-41% of infected are asymptomatic—likely less infectious but may still transmit (WHO)



Individuals may still test positive
Virus may still be detected up to 3 months after onset

Infectiousness ends
- ~10 days after onset, longer if severe disease
- Replication-competent virus has not been isolated from patients after 10 days except in severe illness (CDC)
- Release from isolation if symptoms resolved >24h

Sources: WHO transmission overview, WHO isolation guidelines, CDC isolation guidelines, Business Insider