

Long COVID (Post COVID-19 condition)

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What is Long COVID or Post-COVID-19 condition?

“Long COVID”, or “Post COVID-19 condition” is a spectrum of signs and symptoms that persist for or develop after 12 weeks following an acute COVID-19 infection and which cannot be attributed to any other cause. These have been reported by a significant number of people after recovery from acute illness that last weeks, months or years.

What are the symptoms?

A wide range of symptoms present in Long COVID. These may occur either in isolation or several of them together. They may be transient, constant or may change with time.

The most commonly reported symptoms are fatigue and breathlessness.

Other complaints are mentioned below but may not be limited to:

Respiratory

Cough

Cardiovascular

Chest pain, palpitations (loud or fast heartbeats), chest tightness

Neurological

Inability to focus or concentrate (brain fog), memory issues, headache, sleep difficulties, numbness, tingling sensation

Gastrointestinal

Pain in the abdomen, diarrhoea, nausea, loss of appetite

General symptoms

Joint pain, muscle pain, fever

Mental Health

Mood swings, anxiety, depression

Ear, nose and throat

Loss of smell and taste, earache, sore throat

Skin

Rashes, hair loss.

Who is at risk?

Preliminary data shows that anyone who has had a COVID-19 infection (even if they suffered mild illness) may develop Long COVID. Some data suggests that people who experienced severe COVID-19 illness, those who were hospitalised and those who did not get a COVID-19 vaccine are more likely to experience Long COVID.

I have symptoms of Long COVID, should I contact my healthcare provider?

Consult your healthcare professional if:

- You have developed or have persisting symptoms beyond 12 weeks of recovery
- If your symptoms have worsened or changed

If I am experiencing Long COVID, am I safe to be around others?

Although people were generally not found to be infectious, you may be advised to have a test if your health care professional thinks it necessary. Initial statistics indicate that viral shedding was not associated with Long COVID.

What tests can I expect if I have Long COVID?

Your healthcare provider may recommend tests based on your symptoms and signs. These may include blood tests, tests to assess your organ systems and imaging such as X-rays. Follow-up may be required based on the results.

How will it be treated?

There is limited data on Long COVID and research is ongoing. Your health care provider may provide you with supportive treatment for symptoms and advise assessments including follow-ups. You may be advised referrals if specific organ systems are involved or if you need further care.

What can I do to prevent or improve?

There are no medications to prevent Long COVID. However, some suggested measures that may help include:

- Consult your health professional about your symptoms including mental health symptoms if any.
- Ask about possible outcomes of the symptoms
- Keep a log of your symptoms and track progress and recovery.
- Seek information on how to manage your symptoms.
- Be aware of possible symptoms that may need urgent attention.
- Who to contact in case of emergency.

What kind of support/resources are available to me?

Ask your healthcare professional or local health agency for more information about support groups.

Disclaimer

This information has been developed for educational purposes only. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice. Should you have questions or concerns about any topic described here, please consult your healthcare professional.