

# WHAT IS LONG COVID?

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Long COVID is the diagnosis given to people whose symptoms persist or return in the weeks to months following an initial coronavirus infection. Also known as post-acute sequelae of COVID-19, post-acute COVID-19, or long haul COVID, long COVID can be grouped into three categories:

1. Long COVID in which a person does not recover completely, and they have ongoing symptoms from the damage to their cells from their initial COVID-19 infection.
2. Symptoms result from a hospitalization because of COVID-19.
3. Symptoms appear weeks after the initial COVID-19 infection.<sup>i</sup>

Many people start to experience symptoms as soon as just a few weeks after an initial infection, but for others, symptoms may not appear for a few months.

Research is ongoing and there is still much to learn, however, studies to date suggest that those at greater risk for developing Long COVID include people who have had a severe case of COVID-19, those who had health conditions prior to a COVID-19 infection, those who are unvaccinated, and people who are prone to inflammation.<sup>ii</sup> Even though certain groups may be at a higher risk,



Long COVID affects every person differently.

New research suggests women are more likely than men to develop Long COVID.<sup>iii</sup> One recent study, found females were 22% more likely than their male counterparts to be diagnosed with Long COVID. Experts attribute this to immune system differences. The same study found that women are more likely to have symptoms relating to mood, ear/nose/throat, musculoskeletal, and respiratory systems.

## What are the signs and symptoms of Long COVID?

There is a wide array of symptoms and side effects associated with Long COVID. The hundreds of Long COVID symptoms can be sorted into the following categories<sup>iv</sup>:

### Respiratory Issues:

- Shortness of breath
- Persistent cough
- Lung damage

### Cognitive Dysfunction:

- Chronic fatigue and tiredness
- Difficulty thinking or concentrating
- Dizziness
- Insomnia or sleep issues

### Psychological Problems:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Mood changes

### Neurological Problems<sup>v</sup>:

- Fatigue/brain fog
- Headache
- Myalgias
- Loss of taste or smell or other sensory deficits
- Nervous system dysfunction

## Other Challenges

- Malaise (fatigue from over exertion)
- Heart palpitations
- Stomach or chest pain
- Joint or muscle pain

to diagnose Long COVID, it's important to speak with your doctor about how you are feeling. Be prepared when you arrive for your appointment. Make sure you can talk about:

- when your symptoms first appeared,
- when they get worse,
- any triggers you have noticed,
- and any other details that may help your doctor make a diagnosis and determine treatment options.

Keeping a journal and writing down how you feel every day will help identify any patterns and allow you to reflect on what good days and bad days look like. Living with Long COVID may be challenging, but it can be managed by identifying and treating your symptoms.

## When should I talk to my doctor?

If you notice any lingering or new symptoms, make an appointment with your doctor to determine if you may have Long COVID or some other condition. While there is no single test

**For more information and guidance, contact Respiratory Health Association at [info@resphealth.org](mailto:info@resphealth.org) or visit [RespHealth.org/Covid-19](https://RespHealth.org/Covid-19)**

## References

<sup>i</sup> Berg, S. (2022, March 11). *What doctors wish patients knew about long covid*. American Medical Association. Retrieved July 11, 2022, from <https://www.ama-assn.org/delivering-care/public-health/what-doctors-wish-patients-knew-about-long-covid>

<sup>ii</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). *Long Covid or post-covid conditions*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved July 11, 2022, from [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/long-term-effects/index.html#:~:text=Some%20people%20who%20have%20been,\(PCC\)%20or%20long%20COVID.](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/long-term-effects/index.html#:~:text=Some%20people%20who%20have%20been,(PCC)%20or%20long%20COVID.)

<sup>iii</sup> Caffrey, M. (2022, June 22). *Women "significantly" more likely to develop long Covid, review finds*. AJMC. Retrieved July 13, 2022, from <https://www.ajmc.com/view/review-finds-females-significantly-more-likely-to-develop-long-covid>

<sup>iv</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). *Long Covid or post-covid conditions*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved July 22, 2022, from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/long-term-effects/index.html>

<sup>v</sup> Stefanou MI;Palaodimou L;Bakola E;Smyrnis N;Papadopoulou M;Paraskevas GP;Rizos E;Boutati E;Grigoriadis N;Krogias C;Giannopoulos S;Tsiodras S;Gaga M;Tsvigoulis G; (n.d.). *Neurological manifestations of long-covid syndrome: A narrative review*. Therapeutic advances in chronic disease. Retrieved October 13, 2022, from <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35198136/>