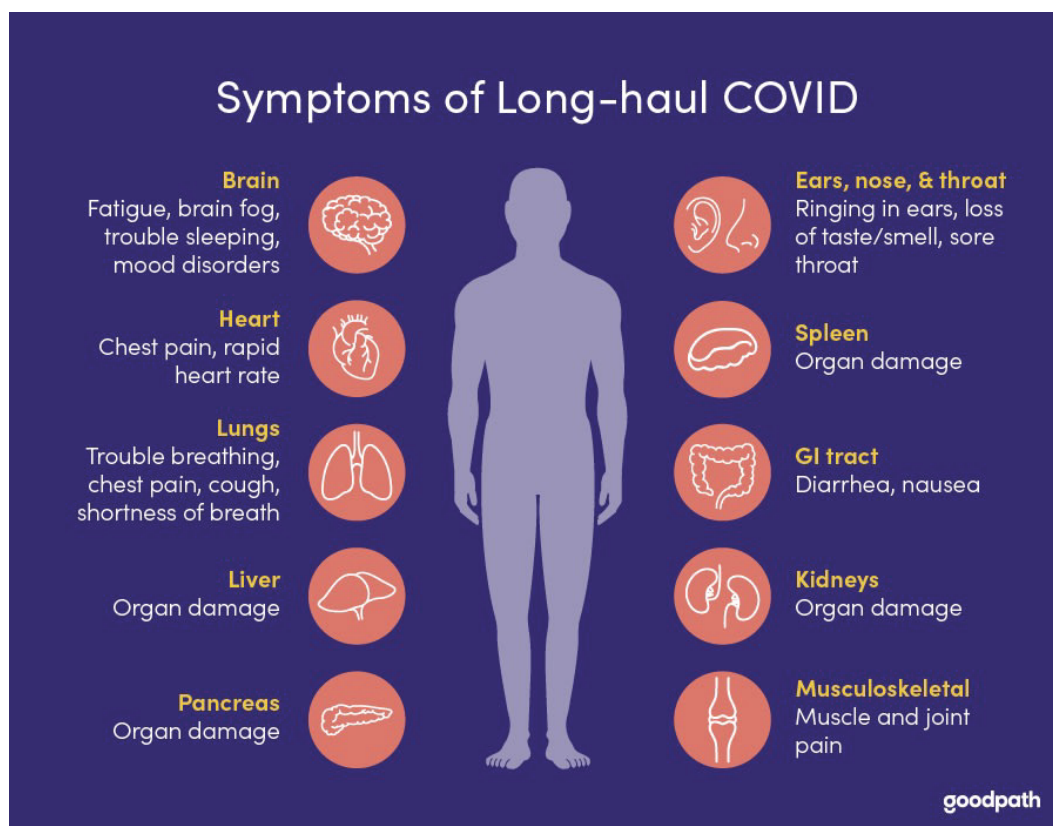


Long COVID

Get the Facts

'Long COVID' is the term often used to describe COVID-19 symptoms that remain for at least four weeks after the initial infection. Long COVID may also be referred to by other names such as post-COVID conditions, PASC (post-acute sequelae of COVID-19), or long-haul COVID.

Some people with severe cases of COVID-19 experience many different symptoms over a longer time, with some issues lasting weeks or months. COVID-19 may affect many organs including the lungs, heart, brain, liver, kidney, and digestive tract. Autoimmune conditions can also develop following COVID-19. This happens when the immune system attacks healthy cells in the body by mistake and causes inflammation (swelling) or tissue damage in the affected parts of the body.



Symptoms of Long COVID may continue after the initial infection or may first appear after the initial illness has passed, which makes these symptoms difficult to explain. There is no single diagnostic test for Long COVID, and the results of routine tests such as x-rays and electrocardiograms may appear normal. Currently, a diagnosis is based on reported symptoms. If symptoms have worsened or are appearing for the first time following the initial illness, then the cause of these symptoms may be Long COVID.

Who Is at Risk of Developing Long COVID?

- Females
- People over 55
- People with more severe initial COVID-19 illness requiring hospitalization or intensive care
- People who showed an immune response to their initial infection
- People who are not fully vaccinated
- People who contracted the SARS-Cov-2 variant
- People with preexisting health conditions, such as diabetes, lung problems, autoimmune diseases, or obesity

Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome (MIS)

While it is very rare, multisystem inflammatory syndrome (MIS) during or immediately after a COVID-19 infection can affect children or adults. It happens when many different body parts become inflamed. Multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C) can be serious, even deadly, but most children who were diagnosed with this condition have gotten better with medical care.

Management of Long COVID

Getting better after Long COVID may require a team approach. Patients may need a physical medicine and rehabilitation physician, pulmonologist, cardiologist, and neurologist. The care team may also include mental health experts, physical or occupational therapists, depending on symptoms and severity.

- Physical therapists work with people to improve physical activity levels, respiratory function, and cardiac endurance, as well as finding ways to conserve energy and handle fatigue.
- Occupational therapists work with people to improve quality of life by addressing management of personal care, nutrition, sleep, handling stress and anxiety, and plans for returning to work.
- Speech-language pathologists work with people to improve oral and written communication, memory, attention, organization, planning, and problem solving skills.

If Long COVID Symptoms Are Severe

Even after a mild case of COVID-19, recurring symptoms may range from a mild annoyance to the point of interrupting daily life. The Federal government has determined Long COVID can be considered a disability under the ADA if it substantially limits major life activities.

Long COVID as a Disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504, and Section 1557

As a result of the rise of Long COVID as a persistent and significant health issue, the Office for Civil Rights of the Department of Health and Human Services and the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice have joined together to provide guidance explaining that Long COVID can be a disability under the federal laws that protect people with disabilities from discrimination. People whose Long COVID qualifies as a disability are entitled to the same protections from discrimination as any other person with a disability to participate in and enjoy all aspects of civic and commercial life.

This article is provided for informational and educational purposes only. The information is not intended as a substitute for professional advice, diagnosis or treatment, and you should not use the information in place of the advice of your medical, psychological, or legal providers.

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