

## Learning About Long COVID



### What is long COVID?

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Most people who have COVID-19 recover in a few days or weeks. But some people have health problems that last for weeks, months, or years. This is often called long COVID. It can happen even if the illness caused mild or no symptoms. But it's more common if your illness was serious.

### What are the symptoms?

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Symptoms of long COVID are present 4 weeks or more after you got COVID-19. The symptoms may get worse after mental or physical activity. And they may come and go.

Long COVID can affect many organs, causing a wide range of symptoms. Common symptoms include:

- Fatigue.
- Shortness of breath or trouble breathing.
- Trouble thinking or concentrating ("brain fog").
- A headache.

Some people also have:

- Depression or anxiety.
- Muscle or joint pain.
- Diarrhea or belly pain.
- A fever.
- A cough.
- Chest pain.
- A fast or pounding heartbeat (heart palpitations).
- Dizziness when they stand up.

Other possible symptoms include:

- Rashes.

- Smell and taste problems.
- Sleep problems.
- A tingling "pins and needles" sensation.
- Menstrual changes.

If you've had COVID-19 and are having these problems, tell your doctor. Make sure the doctor knows that you had COVID-19.

## **How is it diagnosed?**

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To find out if your symptoms are from long COVID, your doctor will do a physical exam and ask you questions about your health history. Your doctor may want you to have certain tests to learn more. You may see a specialist.

## **How is long COVID treated?**

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There is no specific treatment for long COVID, but there are ways your doctor can help you. Your treatment will be based on the symptoms you have. Some symptoms may be treated with medicine. Or you may see a specialist. Your doctor also may recommend different treatments, like physical therapy, depending on your symptoms.

## **How can you care for yourself at home?**

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- If you have fatigue, return to activities slowly. It takes time to get stronger. Pace yourself.
- If you have shortness of breath, ask your doctor about breath training. Breath training can help you take deeper breaths and breathe easier. Methods include pursed-lip breathing and breathing with your diaphragm.
- If you have headaches, ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter pain medicine, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), or naproxen (Aleve). Be safe with medicines. Read and follow all instructions on the label.
- If you have trouble thinking or concentrating, be patient with yourself. Use sticky notes and calendars to remember tasks and events.
- To help control coughing, prop up your head with pillows.
- If you have depression or anxiety, try to take good care of yourself. Regular activity, like walking, may help. Get plenty of sleep, and avoid drugs and alcohol. Consider talking to a counselor. Take medicine as prescribed.
- If you have muscle or joint pain, ask your doctor if you can take over-the-counter pain medicine. Stretching may also ease muscle pain.
- If you aren't getting better, talk to your doctor.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.**