Long COVID or Post-COVID Conditions

DEFINITION

Post-COVID Conditions

Some people who have been infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 can experience long-term effects from their infection, known as post-COVID conditions (PCC) or long COVID.

People call post-COVID conditions by many names, including: long COVID, long-haul COVID, post-acute COVID-19, post-acute sequelae of SARS CoV-2 infection (PASC), long-term effects of COVID, and chronic COVID.

What You Need to Know

- Post-COVID conditions can include a wide range of ongoing health problems; these conditions can last weeks, months, or years.
- Post-COVID conditions are found more often in people who had severe COVID-19 illness, but anyone who has been infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 can experience post-COVID conditions, even people who had mild illness or no symptoms from COVID-19.
- People who are not vaccinated against COVID-19 and become infected may also be at higher risk of developing post-COVID conditions compared to people who were vaccinated and had breakthrough infections.
- There is no single test for post-COVID conditions. While most people with post-COVID conditions have evidence of infection or COVID-19 illness, in some cases, a person with post-COVID conditions may not have tested positive for the virus or known they were infected.
- CDC and partners are working to understand more about who experiences post-COVID conditions and why, including whether groups disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 are at higher risk.

As of July 2021, “long COVID,” also known as post-COVID conditions, can be considered a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Learn more: Guidance on “Long COVID” as a Disability Under the ADA, Section

About Long COVID or Post-COVID Conditions

Post-COVID conditions are a wide range of new, returning, or ongoing health problems that people experience after first being infected with the virus that causes COVID-19. Most people with COVID-19 get better within a few days to a few weeks after infection, so at least four weeks after infection is the start of when post-COVID conditions could first be identified. Anyone who was infected can experience post-COVID conditions.

Most people with post-COVID conditions experienced symptoms days after their SARS CoV-2 infection when they knew they had COVID-19, but some people with post-COVID conditions did not notice when they first had an infection. There is no test to diagnose post-COVID conditions, and people may have a wide variety of symptoms that could come from other health problems. This can make it difficult for healthcare providers to recognize post-COVID conditions. Your healthcare provider considers a diagnosis of post-COVID conditions based on your health history, including if you had a diagnosis of COVID-19 either by a positive test or by symptoms or exposure, as well as doing a health examination.

Symptoms

People with post-COVID conditions (or long COVID) may experience many symptoms.

People with post-COVID conditions can have a wide range of symptoms that can last more than four weeks or even months after infection. Sometimes the symptoms can even go away or come back again.

Post-COVID conditions may not affect everyone the same way. People with post-COVID conditions may experience health problems from different types and combinations of symptoms happening over different lengths of time. Most patients’ symptoms slowly improve with time. However, for some people, post-COVID conditions may last months, and potentially years, after COVID-19 illness and may sometimes result in disability.

People who experience post-COVID conditions most commonly report:

General symptoms
- Tiredness or fatigue that interferes with daily life
- Symptoms that get worse after physical or mental effort (also known as “post-exertional malaise”)
- Fever

Respiratory and heart symptoms
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Cough
- Chest pain
- Fast-beating or pounding heart (also known as heart palpitations)

Neurological symptoms
- Difficulty thinking or concentrating (sometimes referred to as “brain fog”)
- Headache
- Sleep problems
- Dizziness when you stand up (lightheadedness)
- Pins-and-needles feelings
- Change in smell or taste
- Depression or anxiety

Digestive symptoms
- Diarrhea
- Stomach pain

Other symptoms
- Joint or muscle pain
- Rash
- Changes in menstrual cycles