

Long COVID or Post-COVID Conditions

Long COVID Basics

Key points:

- Long COVID is a serious illness that can result in chronic conditions requiring comprehensive care.
- Long COVID can include a wide range of ongoing symptoms and conditions that can last weeks, months, or even years after COVID-19 illness.
- Anyone who had a SARS-CoV-2 infection, the virus that causes COVID-19, can experience Long COVID, including children.
- COVID-19 vaccination is the best available tool to prevent Long COVID.
- Living with Long COVID can be difficult and isolating, especially when there are no immediate answers or solutions.

About Long COVID

[Long COVID is defined](#) as a chronic condition that occurs after SARS-CoV-2 infection and is present for at least 3 months. Long COVID includes a wide range of symptoms or conditions that may improve, worsen, or be ongoing.

Anyone can get Long COVID

Long COVID occurs more often in people who had severe COVID-19 illness, but anyone who gets COVID-19 can experience it, including children.

Most people with Long COVID experience symptoms days after first learning they had COVID-19, but some people who later develop Long COVID do not know when they were infected. People can be [reinfected with SARS-CoV-2](#) multiple times. Each time a person is infected with SARS-CoV-2, they have a risk of developing Long COVID. [Long COVID symptoms](#) and conditions can emerge, persist, resolve, and reemerge over weeks and months. These symptoms and conditions can range from mild to severe, may require comprehensive care, and can even result in a [disability](#).

While rates of new cases of Long COVID have decreased since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, it remains a serious public health concern as millions of U.S. adults and children have been affected by Long COVID.

Who is at risk

While anyone who gets COVID-19 can develop Long COVID, studies have shown that some groups of people are more likely to develop Long COVID than others, including (not a comprehensive list):

- Women
- Hispanic and Latino people
- People who have experienced more severe COVID-19 illness, especially those who were hospitalized or needed intensive care
- People with underlying health conditions and adults who are 65 or older
- People who did not get a COVID-19 vaccine

Health inequities affect populations at risk for Long COVID

[Health inequities](#) from [disability](#), economic, geographic, and other social factors disproportionately affect some groups of people. These inequities can increase the risk of negative health outcomes and impact from Long COVID.

Prevention

CDC emphasizes [core strategies](#) to lower health risks from COVID-19, including severe outcomes such as hospitalization and death. Preventing severe outcomes from COVID-19 illness helps prevent Long COVID. Steps you can take to protect yourself and others include:

- [Staying up to date on COVID-19 vaccination.](#)
- Practicing good [hygiene](#) (practices like handwashing that improve cleanliness)
- Taking [steps for cleaner air](#)
- When you may have a respiratory virus:
 - Use [precautions to prevent spread](#)
 - Seek healthcare promptly for testing and/or treatment if you have [risk factors for severe illness](#); [treatment](#) may help lower your risk of severe illness

Vaccination can prevent Long COVID

Research shows [COVID-19 vaccination](#) is the best available tool to prevent Long COVID.

Testing and diagnosis

Long COVID is not one illness. There is no laboratory test that can determine if your symptoms or conditions are due to Long COVID. A positive SARS-CoV-2 test is not required for a Long COVID diagnosis. Your healthcare provider considers a diagnosis of Long COVID based on:

- Your health history
- If you had a diagnosis of COVID-19 by a positive test, symptoms, or exposure
- A health examination

Clinical evaluations and results of routine blood tests, chest X-rays, and electrocardiograms may be normal in someone with Long COVID. People experiencing Long COVID should seek care from a healthcare provider to create a personal medical management plan and improve their symptoms and quality of life. Talk to your healthcare provider if you think you or your child has Long COVID.

Similar conditions

Some people experiencing Long COVID symptoms have symptoms similar to those reported by people with [myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome \(ME/CFS\)](#) and other poorly understood chronic illnesses that may occur after other infections. These unexplained symptoms or conditions may be misunderstood by healthcare providers, which can result in a delay in diagnosis and people receiving the appropriate care or treatment.

Keep Reading

[Living with Long COVID](#)

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