

Factsheet 23

Updated on 12 November 2020

Long COVID-19 part one

This factsheet has been designed for use by healthcare professionals only.

Introduction

COVID-19 has presented unprecedented health, social and economic challenges not just at the point of a person being infected but also the long-term effects that have been experienced because of this virus. The following factsheet aims to explore what Long COVID-19 is, and the symptoms associated with it.

What is Long COVID?

Most people with COVID-19 will typically recover after two to six weeks of being infected. For some people, some symptoms may linger or recur for weeks or months following initial recovery. This can also happen in people with mild disease (WHO 2020).¹

Long COVID is a term used to commonly explain the lasting effects of COVID-19. According to a publication by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), Long COVID-19 may be divided into four different syndromes. These syndromes may include post – intensive care syndrome, post viral fatigue syndrome and long term COVID syndrome.²

It is important to remember that people with the long-term effects of COVID are not infectious during this time (WHO 2020). In addition, some patients develop medical complications that may have lasting health effects.¹

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What symptoms are seen with Long COVID?

Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicate the most commonly reported long-term symptoms as:³

- Fatigue
- Shortness of breath
- Cough
- Joint pain
- Chest pain

Other reported long-term symptoms include:³

- Difficulty with thinking and concentration (sometimes referred to as “brain fog”)
- Depression
- Muscle pain
- Headache
- Intermittent fever
- Fast-beating or pounding heart (also known as heart palpitations)

Other serious long-term complications have been reported which affect other organs of the body. These appear to be less common.³

As noted by the CDC (2020), it is important to remember the long-term significance of these effects is not yet known and further research is needed.³



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Who does Long COVID affect?

A study undertaken by King's College London (2020), found that one in 20 people with COVID-19 are likely to suffer symptoms for 8 weeks or more – Long COVID - potentially adding up to many hundreds of thousands in the UK and millions worldwide.⁴

Furthermore the study also concluded that older people, women and those with a greater number of different symptoms in the first week of their illness were more likely to develop Long COVID with one in 10 still unable to shake off the side effects eight weeks after infection.⁵

For more information on Long COVID join Dr Daniel Wootton on 7 December 2020 for our Respiratory Impact Week. Please visit our website [here](#) for details.

References:

1. World Health Organization 2020. *Long Term effects of COVID* Available from: https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/risk-comms-updates/update-36-long-term-symptoms.pdf?sfvrsn=5d3789a6_2
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3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2020. *Long term effects of COVID*. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/long-term-effects.html>
4. Kings College London 2020. Available from: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/study-identifies-those-most-risk-long-covid#:~:text=A%20new%20analysis%20by%20researchers,the%20UK%20and%20millions%20worldwide>
5. National Health Service 2020. Available from: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2020/11/nhs-launches-40-long-covid-clinics-to-tackle-persistent-symptoms/>