

What is Long COVID?

While there is not yet a universally agreed, specific definition for Long COVID, in October 2021 the World Health Organization defined it as experiencing COVID-like symptoms usually 3 months after having COVID-19, which last for at least 2 months and cannot be explained by an alternative diagnosis. However, individuals can present symptoms in varied and unique ways.

What causes Long COVID?

At this time the cause of Long COVID remains unclear, and it is likely that there is no singular trigger. Scientists are exploring several possible explanations from high levels of viral RNA early during an infection, the presence of certain autoantibodies, type 2 diabetes and the reactivation of Epstein-Barr virus.

Who is most likely to experience Long COVID?

While Long COVID is experienced by many people regardless of age, race, or gender, a new study found that women, people 40 and older, Black individuals, and those with pre-existing health conditions may be more likely to develop symptoms. Individuals with more severe initial infection and people who are unvaccinated are at greater risk for Long COVID.

How long does Long COVID last?

It is unfortunately still not completely clear. Some patients experience it for weeks or months, while others are still experiencing it over a year after their initial COVID-19 diagnosis.

What are available treatments for Long COVID?

There is no singular treatment for Long COVID. Instead, physicians are starting to create customized treatment plans for their patients based on the specific symptoms the patient is experiencing. For the social or mental health impacts of Long COVID, participation in patient advocacy and peer support groups has been effective in improving symptoms. This is an active area of research to determine the best treatment for Long COVID.



How many people experience Long COVID?

Lingering symptoms after COVID infection are common. Tens of millions of people likely meet the World Health Organization definition of Long COVID, but the precise number of impacted individuals is unknown at this time due to challenges in diagnosis.

What are the common symptoms of Long COVID?

The most frequently reported symptoms are shortness of breath, chest pain, brain fog, and fatigue. However, there are over 200 symptoms that have been reported. Symptoms can vary significantly from person to person and also include pain, neurologic symptoms, depression or anxiety, loss of smell or taste, and fever.

How does getting vaccinated impact Long COVID?

Primarily, getting vaccinated reduces the impact of Long COVID by preventing initial COVID-19 infection. New research shows that vaccination prior to being infected with COVID-19 is associated with reduced risk of Long COVID, and vaccination post-infection could also relieve symptoms. More data is needed to understand whether vaccination can help people who have already developed Long COVID.

How does having Long COVID affect my employment status?

Long COVID is now recognized as a disability under federal law. This means that workers are protected from being discriminated against by their employers for experiencing Long COVID. To qualify as a disability, Long COVID symptoms must significantly impact the individuals ability to participate in major life activities. Workers with Long COVID may also receive workers' compensation, depending on the laws of their state.

More information available at www.aboutlongcovid.org

