

Long COVID – What do we know so far?

COVID-19 will go down in history as one of the worst pandemics in recent times. Many of us are aware of the risks and symptoms if we were to contract COVID-19 and after 14 days or so, if we are lucky enough, we will be back to our usual selves.

However, something unusual has come out of this pandemic, something that many are calling 'Long COVID'. But what is it exactly? What are the symptoms and how common is it? There is a lot of uncertainty around Long COVID at the moment but below is a summary what we know so far.

What is long COVID?

Long COVID has been reported by people who are suffering longer term effects from the COVID-19 virus. Different people have reported different symptoms, but the most common of all is fatigue. Some other symptoms reported are breathlessness, continuous cough, headaches, problems with vision, loss of smell or taste and also mental health problems including depression, anxiety and head fog.

Long COVID has since been acknowledged as real, whereas before it was put down to longer recovery times.

Is it common?

It is not that common, only 12% of people in a survey who had contracted COVID-19 reported at least one longer lasting symptom after one month. The most common symptoms of people reporting long COVID are:

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

Does long COVID come from severe COVID-19 symptoms?

It would seem not. It was previously thought that only those who experienced severe symptoms when they first contracted COVID-19 were the ones who experienced longer lasting effects. However, even if you have mild symptoms from COVID-19 it is still possible to suffer with long COVID symptoms.

What is causing long COVID?

There are lots of theories as to how long COVID is caused, but there is currently no definitive answer. It is likely that although most of the virus has been cleared from the body there can be pockets of virus left over in various places which can cause long COVID.

Another theory is that COVID-19 causes the immune system to function differently post recovery, which in turn causes various symptoms as a result. It may also alter people's metabolism as reports of people struggling with their blood sugar levels post COVID-19 and developing diabetes. There may also be longer lasting damage to the lungs and brain.

However, is it not yet certain what the cause of long COVID is and what the best treatments are.

Are longer lasting symptoms after a virus common?

Yes they are. It has been well documented that people have suffered with longer term affects such as fatigue. However, it does seem that it is more common in more people after COVID-19. Until more research is done and more statistics are analysed it will be hard to determine just how common longer lasting symptoms are.

Will people fully recover?

Given that COVID-19 is still relatively new there is a lack of long term data to refer to. But it is reported that the number of people with longer term symptoms seems to be lessening over time. Long term surveys are being carried out where those who have suffered with long COVID will be monitored regularly over the next 25 years to gather more data and understanding.

What should you do if you think you have long COVID?

The NHS have a COVID-19 recovery plan which you can refer to. You can find it [HERE](#). It encourages use of the "3 Ps" which are;

- Pace yourself
- Plan your days
- Prioritise

The above points are to help conserve energy to speed your recovery and to speak with your GP or hospital team if you're not recovering as quickly as you'd expect.

Useful sources & Information:

Some of the information sourced for this article was originally published on the links below. If you would like to access this and further information in more detail please follow the links below –

<https://www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk/your-road-to-recovery/managing-daily-activities/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/long-term-effects-of-coronavirus-long-covid/>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-54296223>

If you feel you may need some support, you can contact Care first. Care first is a leading provider of confidential, professional counselling, information and advice services. All employees are eligible to use Care first, our services include; telephone counselling, information services and online support. Call Care first on the Freephone number provided by your organisation and you can speak to a professional in confidence.

If you would like to view the Webinar on '**Long COVID – What do we know so far?**' this is being delivered live on **Thursday 11th February at 12pm**, please use the following link to register for this session –

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/4953834658372308748>

If you are unable to join the webinar live, a recording of the session can be accessed using the same link above after the webinar has taken place.