



TOWN OF GREENWICH
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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LONG COVID: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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Long-COVID is now a phenomenon that appears to be impacting about one out of five COVID-19 survivors (CDC). It goes by many other names including **Post COVID-19 Condition**, **Long-Haul COVID**, **Post-Acute COVID-19**, **Long-Term Effects of COVID**, and **Post-Acute Sequelae of SARS-CoV-2**, (PASC). Because a COVID-19 infection in any of its variations can infect many different body organs; the symptoms of Long-haul COVID can be diverse and have a long lasting impact on many different body organs and functions. These chronic symptoms can persist for weeks, months and years (CDC, 2022). With many suffering these long-term COVID effects, many questions are being posed to health care providers and to Contact Tracers and Monitors of the Greenwich Department of Health. Here is a synopsis of the frequently asked questions and science-based responses to them:

Question: Can someone who never had COVID get Long-haul (Chronic) COVID?

Answer: Yes. Many COVID-infected people never know they have or had COVID if they are or were asymptomatic (without symptoms) and never tested. The USA has under-tested people for COVID since it reached our shores. When only symptomatic people are tested, we are merely confirming COVID in those most likely to be infected based on their symptoms. From the start, we needed to know who had COVID even if they were without symptoms so we could help contain the spread of the disease. Now both adults and children who thought they had been COVID-free are presenting with Long-haul COVID symptoms (AMA).

Question: Are the symptoms of Long-COVID the same as original COVID Symptoms?

Answer: They can be, but they can also be a much wider range of symptoms impacting the many different body systems that COVID -19 can infect. Chronic or long haul COVID symptoms can occur from about 4-

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weeks after one's recovery from their initial COVID-19 infection. The symptoms can last from around a month to over a year or more after the initial infection. COVID-19 is a new (novel) virus, so we only have a short history of learning about it, its full impact on the body, and how long symptoms can last. Symptoms have been seen to also come and go (Berg/CDC/AMA/MMWR).

Question: What symptoms can a person experience with Long-COVID?

Answer: The symptoms of Long-COVID can be physical, emotional, and cognitive, or a combination of any or all. Different people are affected differently (CDC):

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/long-term-effects/index.html>. The most common symptoms include:

- **General Symptoms:** A fatigue that becomes worse after physical or mental exertion, and which is often accompanied by fever
- **Heart & Lung Symptoms:** Difficulty breathing, being short of breath, coughing, having palpitations/a rapid heartbeat, and chest pains
- **Neurological (nerve) symptoms:** “Brain fog” exhibited through difficulty concentrating or thinking, headaches, trouble sleeping, getting light-headed or dizzy upon standing, feelings of “pins & needles”, an altered sense of smell or taste that persists, feelings of depression and/or anxiety.
- **Digestive Symptoms:** Diarrhea and/or stomach pains
- **Additional Symptoms:** A rash, joint or muscle pains, and in girls/women, altered menstrual cycles. Some people who had severe COVID infections have developed multiple organ involvement that has impacted their kidneys, heart, lung, brain and skin as well as autoimmune conditions. Others have developed diabetes (pancreas), heart and neurological diseases (CDC/AMA).

Question: How is Chronic (Long-haul, Long-COVID, Post-Acute) COVID diagnosed?

Answer: Long-COVID can be difficult to diagnose because of its multi-organ/multi-system involvement (CDC/AMA). Like many other chronic diseases, it takes time to pinpoint the diagnosis accurately, so what you share with your primary care provider and the specialists you see is very important diagnostically. Diagnosis can involve blood tests, urinalysis, x-rays and scans, and a variety of cardiac, neurological, and respiratory tests as well as tests for cognitive functioning, and anxiety and depression screenings. Download and use these CDC Patient Tips form to prepare in advance of your visit with a healthcare provider for a medical appointment for a Post-COVID conditions appointment:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/long-term-effects/post-covid-appointment/index.html>

Question: Can children get Long-Haul COVID?

Answer: The *American Medical Association* has noted, that they can, and that their symptoms are similar to adults with that diagnosis, but they are impacted in lower numbers (Dr. Devang Sanghavi, Medical Director, Mayo Clinic's Medical Intensive Care Unit)

Question: Is there anything that can help Long-haul COVID sufferers feel better?

Answer: The *American Medical Association's* paper on patients' questions about Long-haul COVID responded to this topic by noting that there have been anecdotal reports of people who were initially without symptoms but tested positive, and that after receiving a COVID vaccine, their symptoms went away (Dr. Sanghavi in Berg, 2022). .

Question: Give the wide range of long term symptoms possible with Long-COVID, is it considered a bonafide disability?

Answer: Yes; According to the Department of Health and Human Services and the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice, long COVID **CAN BE** a disability under Titles II (state and local government) and III (public accommodations) of the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504), and Section 1557 of the *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act* (Section 1557). Each of these federal laws protects people with disabilities from discrimination. An individual who is seeking a disability status is required to have an individual assessment performed to determine whether their long-COVID condition or any of its symptoms substantially poses a limitation on a major life activity. (HHS, 2021) See HHS point #4 in the references for your rights as a disabled person under this determination.

Question: Are you more likely to develop Long-Haul COVID if you are not vaccinated?

Answer: The CDC has noted that unvaccinated people who subsequently develop a COVID-19 infection may be at higher risk for developing Chronic COVID symptoms when compared to those who were either vaccinated or who had breakthrough infections after being vaccinated.

Question: Is anything in progress to learn more about Long-haul or Chronic Covid-19 that can help individuals impacted?

Answer: Yes, The CDC and their numerous partners at science based agencies, organizations and institutions are conducting research, gathering data, doing studies, and publishing findings with clinicians, public health practitioners on Post-COVID conditions. These include multidisciplinary healthcare practitioners and clinicians, researchers, infection control experts, information managers and data experts, epidemiologists, and others. They are seeking answers to who is at risk for developing Post-COVID

conditions, how many people are affected, and which demographic groups are being impacted/most impacted. They are looking to identify effective treatment interventions as well as what financial burden is associated with treating or living with Post-COVID conditions. Others are researching the health equity barriers to everyone being able to obtain equal access to effective care, services, medications and treatments. Still others are working on creating and distributing clinical guidance and educational information.

Question: Can Paxlovid or monoclonal antibody therapy help people with Long-COVID?

Answer: There is not a definitive answer yet to that question. Large group studies have not yet been done. Single patients have identified feeling improved, but that is not sufficient to qualify as a science-based study outcome. In MedPage Today (Walker, 2022) quotes Dr. Michael Peluso of the University of California, San Francisco, in saying that Paxlovid may benefit patients with Long-COVID, but that right now the drug cannot be accessed for that (untested) purpose. The American Society for Microbiology points to a lack of reliable current data since what we have now in regards to this was collected when we were working with the original strains of COVID and not with the current Omicron B variants that are now dominant (ASM, 2022).

Resources On Long-COVID

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