Long COVID

Information on the possible long-term effects of COVID-19

Some people who have been ill with COVID-19 find themselves still suffering from different health issues for weeks or months afterwards. The potential long-term effects of COVID-19 are described as long COVID.

When do we talk about long COVID?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>positive PCR test</th>
<th>negative PCR test</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COVID-19 disease</td>
<td>Long COVID</td>
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- after suffering from acute COVID-19, four weeks after the first symptoms
- continued or new symptoms and no other illness as the cause of the symptoms

What symptoms can occur with long COVID?

Possible known symptoms of long COVID include:

- **General**
  - Fatigue and exhaustion
  - Muscle weakness and joint pains
  - A general feeling of being unwell

- **Respiratory system**
  - Shortness of breath and breathlessness
  - Breathing difficulties
  - Coughing

- **Senses**
  - Altered taste and smell
  - Dizziness

- **Cardiovascular**
  - Chest pain
  - Heart palpitations, irregular heart rhythm
  - Coagulation disorders (thromboembolism)

- **Nervous system**
  - Sleep disorders
  - Headaches
  - Impaired concentration and memory

- **Other symptoms**
  - Hair loss
  - Kidney disease
  - Metabolic abnormalities
  - Feelings of anxiety
  - Depressive mood

- **Chest pain**
- **Heart palpitations, irregular heart rhythm**
- **Impaired concentration and memory**
- **Feelings of anxiety**
- **Depressive mood**

What factors can promote long COVID?

There has currently not been enough research to determine what causes long COVID. However, there are a number of factors that can increase an individual’s risk of contracting long COVID. They include:

- severe COVID-19 disease progression
- older individual
- severe obesity
- certain underlying diseases of the lungs and heart

However, individuals can also be affected by long COVID if they only had mild COVID-19 symptoms or are younger with no underlying diseases.
How can I avoid long COVID?
If you protect yourself from becoming infected with Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, then you will also avoid the risk of contracting long COVID. A *coronavirus vaccination* and practising the Hands-Face-Space rule (keep your distance, practise good hygiene, wear a mask in everyday life, ventilate rooms and use the Coronavirus Track and Trace app) provide the best protection.

Where can I find information and help if I am suffering from long COVID?
Have a face-to-face conversation with your doctor to clarify whether you are suffering from long COVID and what treatment may be available to you. The pressure of suffering and the restrictions it causes in daily life can be very great. Get in touch with your family doctor if you believe you may be suffering from long COVID.

Information and services for people affected and their families:

- The [Long COVID Germany](https://longcoviddeutschland.org/post-covid-19-ambulanzen/) website provides information on long COVID and a list of long COVID outpatient clinics in Germany.
- The [National Contact and Information Office for Motivation and Assistance for Self-help Groups (NAKOS)](https://www.nakos.de/data/Online-Publikationen/2021/NAKOS-Corona-Selbsthilfegruppen.pdf) provides an overview of current self-help groups for people with long COVID.
- The [Association of Scientific Medical Societies (AWMF)](https://www.awmf.org/uploads/tx_szleitlinien/020-027l_S1_Post_COVID_Long_COVID_2021-07.pdf) has developed a set of guidelines for the symptoms, diagnosis and treatment of long COVID, which is updated regularly.
- The [Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs](https://www.bmas.de/DE/Service/Presse/Meldungen/2021/long-covid-rehabilitation-arbeitsleben.html) provides information on rehabilitation options and services for people with long COVID.

**Sources:**
- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence: [www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng188](http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng188)
- Nature Medicine: [www.nature.com/articles/s41591-021-01283-z](http://www.nature.com/articles/s41591-021-01283-z)