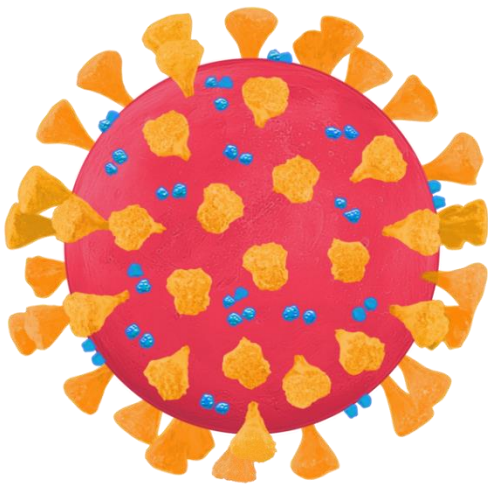




Healthcare  
Improvement  
Scotland

**SIGN**  
Evidence-based  
clinical guidelines

# Long COVID

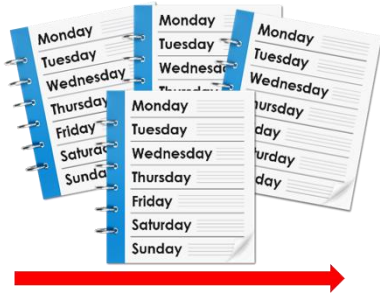


## What is Long Covid?



After catching COVID-19 some people can feel ill and take longer to get better than others.

In this booklet we use 'long COVID' to mean signs and **symptoms** that last more than four weeks after you get COVID-19.



A **symptom** is a sign that you have an illness.



Long COVID is a new illness that healthcare staff are still learning about.

## What is this information about?



This information is about support for children and adults who have had COVID-19 and have symptoms that last more than four weeks.

It may also be helpful for their family, friends and carers.

## How can I tell if I have long Covid?



Information about signs and symptoms that develop during or after COVID-19 are on the [Your COVID Recovery website](#) or on [NHS Inform](#).



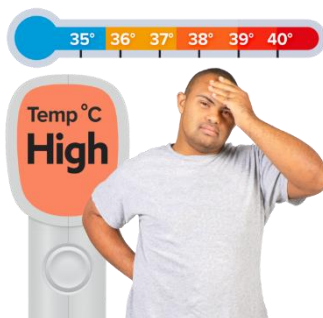
People with long COVID do not all have the same symptoms.

The most common symptoms are:

### General symptoms



- Feeling tired



- Having a fever - when your body temperature is very high

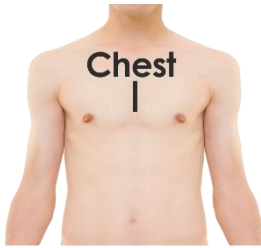


- Having pain



## Problems with your breathing:

- Breathlessness
- Cough



## Problems with your heart and circulation

- Chest tightness
- Chest pain
- Palpitations – when you feel your heartbeat getting faster



## Neurological symptoms

- Brain fog – when you find it difficult to concentrate or you forget things



- Headache
- Pins and needles, and numbness



- Finding it difficult to sleep



- Feeling dizzy



- Problems with your eyes and being able to see well



- Finding it difficult to walk or move around



- Older people may get delirium – feeling very confused

## **Symptoms in your digestive system**



- Stomach pain



- Feeling that you are going to be sick



- Diarrhoea
- Losing weight and wanting to eat less



### **Musculoskeletal symptoms**

- Pain in your joints or muscles



### **Emotional symptoms**

- Feeling depressed or worried
- Symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

**PTSD** is a mental health condition after an event that made you feel very frightened or stressed.



### **Ear, nose and throat symptoms**

- Tinnitus – when there is a ringing noise in your ears
- Feeling dizzy



- Sore ears
- Sore throat



- Not being able to taste or smell things



### **Skin symptoms**

- Skin rashes or losing your hair



Children and young people may not have these symptoms.

If you are worried:

- talk to your healthcare staff
- get online information about [coronavirus in children](#)



## What should I do if I think I have long COVID?



Speak to your doctor or healthcare staff if it is 4 weeks after you got COVID-19 and:

- you are worried your symptoms are not getting better
- or you have new symptoms



They will:

- give you an appointment
- give you information in a format or language you can understand to help you make decisions about your care



You will have a choice to have your appointment:

- over the phone
- by video
- or in person if this is possible



You can get support with things like:



- having extra time for your appointment
- or having an interpreter



Your healthcare staff will ask if you want your family or carers to be part of making decisions about your care.

It is important to have vaccines.



They can help to reduce the risk of further infection.

Healthcare staff do not know if vaccines have any effect on the symptoms of COVID-19.



You can find more information here:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/coronavirus-vaccine/>

## How will my symptoms be checked?



You are the best person to help your healthcare professional understand how your symptoms affect you.

If your healthcare staff thinks you have long COVID they will ask you:



- what health conditions you had before you got COVID
- if you had a COVID test



- information about your symptoms after having COVID-19
- how to look after your symptoms



- if you are finding everyday things difficult
- what to expect when you are recovering from your illness



Your healthcare staff may examine you to find out more about:

- any physical symptoms you have



- if you are having problems thinking or remembering things



- how you are managing with things you do every day like work, education and travelling



- if you can look after yourself



- if you feel lonely



- if there are changes in how you feel or how you behave



If your healthcare staff is worried you will harm yourself or take your own life they will refer you straight away for an assessment by a mental health professional.



You will be referred urgently to hospital if you have any symptoms that mean your life is at risk like:

- there is not enough oxygen in your blood
- severe lung disease
- pain in your chest

## What tests will I get?



Your tests could be:

- blood tests
  
- measuring your blood pressure and heart rate





- a test that checks if you find it difficult to exercise, for example a one-minute sit-to-stand test
- a chest X-ray if you are finding it difficult to breathe 12 weeks after you got COVID



If you have mental health symptoms such as anxiety or depression, you may be referred:

- for psychological therapies
- or to a psychiatry service

You can find out more about these services [online](#).

## How will my care be planned?



When planning your care, it is important that you are involved in discussions and decisions.



After an assessment, your healthcare staff will talk to you about:

- your symptoms and tests





Know who to contact if you are worried about your symptoms or if you need more support.

Look at advice and support your healthcare professional has told you about.

These include:

- support groups including peer support

This is usually online.

**Peer support** is when people use their own experiences to help each other.



- online groups and apps like [NHS Inform](#) or [Your COVID Recovery](#)



- how to get support about:
  - social care
  - housing
  - work
  - money



Healthcare staff do not know:

- if taking vitamins and supplements helps with long COVID symptoms, makes symptoms worse, or has no effect at all
- what medication can help treat long COVID



You can use the usual treatments for symptoms such as using a cream for a skin rash.

## What will happen if I am referred for rehabilitation?



**Rehabilitation** is a service that helps you to recover from your illness.



The rehabilitation team will work with you to make a plan about:

- what services you need
- what you want to achieve
- how to manage all your symptoms and what to do if they come back or change
- how to manage going back to work or education







You will get a copy of the care plan or records.

## What happens if I need extra support?



Some people may need more care than others, for example if you are older or have disabilities.

If you are older or have a disability, you will be offered more support.



This could include:

- a care package to support you for a short time
- a plan of how you will be supported in the future
- support with looking after yourself if you are living alone or if the person you live with has died



## Follow up appointments



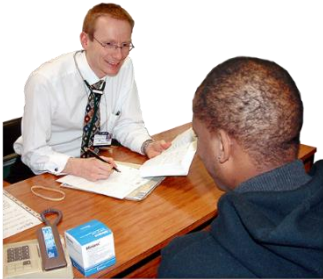
It is important you go to follow up appointments with your healthcare staff.

These appointments will help with your recovery.

Your healthcare staff will:



- talk and agree with you how often you need follow-up appointments to check how you are getting on
- talk and agree which healthcare staff can help you
- ask what is the best way to check how things are going



For example do you want to have online meetings or meet face-to-face?



- check symptoms and talk about:
  - if they are changinghow they affect your life and wellbeing



You may be asked to check your heart rate, blood pressure and oxygen level when you are at home.

Your healthcare staff will tell you how to do this.

When your health is getting better, healthcare staff will talk and agree a **discharge plan** with you.



A **discharge plan** is a plan about what services you will need when you leave hospital.

## Who will be involved in my care?



You may see staff who have specialist skills to help with different parts of your recovery.

A team could include specialists in:

- occupational therapy
- physiotherapy
- psychology and psychiatry
- rehabilitation
- food
- eye care
- speech and language therapist.



## **My contacts.**

**Use this space to write down contact details for people involved in your care.**

## Where can I find out more?



### **NHS inform**

[www.nhsinform.scot/longer-term-effects-of-covid-19-long-covid](http://www.nhsinform.scot/longer-term-effects-of-covid-19-long-covid)

### **NHS 24 (Scotland)**

[www.nhs24.scot](http://www.nhs24.scot) Phone: 111



### **NHS 111 (England and Wales)**

[111.nhs.uk](http://111.nhs.uk) Phone: 111

### **NHS Your Covid Recovery**

[www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk](http://www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk)



### **Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland – Long Covid Support Service**

<https://www.chss.org.uk/coronavirus/coronavirus-information-and-support/%20long-covid/>

Phone: 0808 801 0899

email: [advice@chss.org.uk](mailto:advice@chss.org.uk)

or text NURSE to 66777



We would like to thank the people who helped us make this booklet.