

Understanding Long COVID

It's been more than two years since the pandemic began, and we continue to learn about the short- and long-term health effects of COVID-19. Although most people get better within weeks, some experience long-term effects, known as post-COVID conditions (PCC) or long COVID.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), PCC can include a wide range of ongoing health problems. These conditions can last weeks, months or much longer.

Nearly 1 in 5 American adults who have had COVID-19 still have long COVID, according to the CDC's Household Pulse Survey.



Symptoms

Long COVID can happen to anyone who has had COVID-19, even if the illness was mild or they had no initial symptoms. People with PCC may experience various types and combinations of symptoms. According to the CDC, common long COVID symptoms include:



Tiredness or fatigue that interferes with daily life



Symptoms that get worse after physical or mental effort



Fever



Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath



Cough



Chest pain



Heart palpitations



Difficulty thinking or concentrating ("brain fog")



Headache



Sleep problems



Lightheadedness



Pins-and-needles feelings



Change in smell or taste



Depression or anxiety

Prevention

According to the CDC, research suggests that people who are vaccinated but experience a breakthrough infection are less likely to report PCC than those who aren't vaccinated.

Studies are in progress to better understand PCC and how many people experience them. Living with such a condition can be challenging, especially when no immediate answers or solutions exist. However, people experiencing long COVID can seek care from a healthcare provider to develop a personal medical management plan that can help improve their symptoms and quality of life.

Contact your doctor if you think you have a PCC or are experiencing conditions unusual for your health history.