

# Long COVID

**Learn about the symptoms of 'long COVID', where to seek support, and how to protect yourself**

## What is long COVID?

COVID-19, like many other viruses, can cause ongoing symptoms such as a cough or fatigue. However, most people will recover in a few weeks.

Long COVID is a condition where people experience persistent symptoms, usually 3 months from the onset of COVID-19, that continue for at least 2 months. There is no test for long COVID. Diagnosing it means doctors have to rule out other conditions with similar symptoms.

## What are some of the symptoms of long COVID?

Long COVID symptoms can be mild or severe, and people may experience one or more symptoms. Symptoms include:

- Fatigue
- shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing
- memory, concentration or sleep problems
- a persistent cough
- chest pain
- difficulty speaking
- muscle aches
- loss of smell or taste
- depression or anxiety
- fever.

Long COVID is less common in children. In children, symptoms predominantly include:

- mood symptoms
- fatigue
- sleep disorders.

It can be difficult to tell the difference between long COVID and similar conditions, such as chronic fatigue syndrome, heart or neurological problems. So, it is important that you speak with your doctor if you experience symptoms you are concerned about.

## How likely is it that someone will get long COVID?

There are many things that can change a person's risk of getting long COVID:

- Vaccination – it is less likely that a vaccinated person will develop long COVID.
- The variant of COVID-19 – different variants of COVID-19 can affect a person's chances of getting long COVID. For example, the Omicron variant is less likely to result in long COVID than the Delta variant.
- Your age and sex – younger people and males are less likely to develop long COVID.
- Underlying health conditions – people with certain pre-existing conditions, such as hypertension, diabetes, obesity and asthma, are more likely to develop long COVID.
- Severe COVID-19 infection- people who had a severe COVID-19 infection requiring hospitalisation or who have had COVID-19 multiple times are more likely to develop long COVID.

## How long does long COVID last?

The average duration of long COVID is about 3 to 4 months, but this can vary.

Most long COVID symptoms will go away on their own within 12 months, but it can take up to 24 months in some cases.

A small number of people may develop long COVID that has an ongoing effect on their lungs, heart, blood clotting, or cause diabetes.

## How do I manage long COVID?

While most long COVID symptoms can be managed at home, it affects everyone differently. So, it's important you speak to a doctor if you are concerned about your symptoms.

Treatment for long COVID aims to manage symptoms and any complications. There is no single treatment for long COVID. People with long COVID should not over-exert themselves while they recover.

A doctor will guide you on how to manage symptoms at home or will refer you to a specialist.

## How can I protect myself from long COVID?

The best way to help protect yourself from long COVID is by not getting infected with COVID-19. You can help protect yourself by practising COVID safe behaviours:

- stay up to date with all your recommended COVID-19 [vaccinations](#)
- [get tested](#) if you have symptoms
- catch up with friends and family outdoors or in [well-ventilated spaces](#)
- [wear a mask](#) in public places where you can't maintain [physical distancing](#)
- [wash or sanitise your hands](#) regularly.