

Frequently Asked Questions for Adult Patients - Long COVID Symptoms or Health Concerns

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A. General information

What is long COVID?

- Some people have lingering physical, cognitive and/or mental health problems for weeks or months after having COVID-19.
- Long COVID was originally named by patients who had ongoing problems. It may also be called “long haul COVID”, “post COVID”, “post COVID-19 syndrome” or “post COVID-19 condition”.

How many people get long COVID?

- Information is being collected in Alberta and around the world about long COVID. Many research studies show that about 20% of people who had COVID-19 continue to have lingering or long term symptoms.
- Long COVID can affect anyone – old or young, people who are healthy and people with other health problems. It can happen if you were hospitalized for COVID-19 or if you were not hospitalized.

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What are the most common signs of long COVID?

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| Trouble thinking, remembering or concentrating | Loss of taste or smell | Fast or irregular heartbeat | Weakness and fatigue all the time | Shortness of breath or a cough that won't go away |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Stress, anxiety or depression | Trouble walking or moving | Been unable to go back to work | Joint or muscle pain | Problems swallowing |

- Visit [MyHealth.Alberta.ca](https://myhealth.alberta.ca) for details on managing individual symptoms.
- Information is continually reviewed to reflect new learnings. For example, one common symptom is extreme fatigue, not just “tiredness”. Activity and exercise may be harmful for people with fatigue from long COVID and may even cause worsening of symptoms.
- Please contact your health care provider for advice about your individual rehabilitation plan or call the Rehabilitation Advice Line at 1-833-379-0563.

How long will I have long COVID problems?

- Because long COVID is quite new, it is hard to predict how long it will affect each person. Most people experience some improvement after a number of weeks or months of dealing with their symptoms by using information and services to help them. For some people, the problems can last much longer or improve, then worsen again.
- It is important to STOP, REST, and PACE according to how you are feeling each day.

B. When and where to find help

When should I call 911 or go to the Emergency Department?

You should call 911 if you are having a medical emergency, which may include:

- Having trouble breathing (hard to catch your breath, only able to say 1 word at a time)
- Having a hard time waking up
- Feeling very confused
- Passing out or fainting
- Having chest pain

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When should I see my doctor?

It is important to see your doctor if you:

- Are worried about your recovery.
- Feel short of breath and it's not getting better, no matter what you try.
- Feel very short of breath doing things that are usually easy for you.
- Find that your attention, memory, thinking, or energy levels are not getting better.
- Have problems that stop you from doing your regular activities or make them hard to do (ex. taking caring for yourself or going back to work or school).
- Feel depressed, anxious, or stressed and this feeling isn't getting better.

How can I get information and help if I have signs of long COVID?

- A complete list of resources for patients and families is on the AHS website called [Getting Healthy after COVID-19](#).
- Doctors and healthcare workers across Alberta have access to information about how to care for people who have signs of long COVID.
- You may be referred to a clinic that specializes in long COVID. Virtual care may be used depending on your location.

I can't afford the treatment my healthcare team says I need. What can I do?

- Sometimes when you have long COVID your healthcare team may suggest that you may need respiratory, occupational, or physical therapy.
- All of the information and education listed above on the AHS website are available to people living in Alberta, free of charge.
- Talk to your doctor or healthcare team about other services that are available in your local area at no cost or reduced cost.

C. Vaccination

If I think I have long COVID should I still get vaccinated?

- Yes. Alberta Health Services strongly recommends that people get fully vaccinated as soon as they are eligible according to [Alberta's COVID-19 vaccine program](#), whether they have already had COVID-19 or not. Having COVID is not the same as getting the vaccine.
- If you have questions about the vaccine or your health, talk to your family physician or healthcare team.
- Some people find that their symptoms change after vaccination, however, more research is happening to study this.