Long COVID

**March 2022**

There is increasing evidence emerging on the long-term health impacts of COVID-19.

## What is long COVID?

Long COVID is commonly used to describe symptoms that continue or develop from 3 months after you have had COVID-19 infection.

Most people with COVID-19 recover completely and return to normal health. However, some people who have been infected report a wide range of symptoms beyond the usual time of ‘recovery’. These ongoing symptoms may persist for some time, and can have a significant impact on the daily lives of those who are affected, and their whānau.

COVID-19 was only discovered in 2019, so there is still limited information on the potential long-term health outcomes of COVID-19. However, this is now an important area of international research.

## What are the signs of long COVID?

There are a wide range of ongoing symptoms of long COVID-19 that people report.

Ongoing symptoms can vary and affect people differently. There are many different conditions that share some or all of these symptoms, so it is important to check with your doctor before assuming everything is due to a COVID-19 infection. Some of the most reported symptoms include:

* Fatigue/tiredness.
* Shortness of breath.
* Cough.
* Low mood.
* Headaches.
* Difficulty concentrating, cognitive impairment or ‘brain fog’.
* Sleep disturbances.

It is not yet known how common long COVID-19 is.

## Who develops long COVID?

Long COVID appears to be more common among people who get severe COVID-19 symptoms when they first get sick, but can also affect those who initially had mild or moderate COVID-19. Long COVID-19 is seen in all age groups, including children.

Some factors that may be associated with increased chance of having long COVID-19 symptoms have been identified. These include:

* older age;
* having more than one underlying chronic medical conditions;
* a higher body mass index (obesity);
* being female.

The best way to prevent post-COVID-19 conditions is to be fully vaccinated (including booster).

## What are the treatment and support options for people with long COVID-19?

Most people make a full recovery, but it can take time. Monitor your symptoms and seek help if you are not improving.

For support with the management and treatment of long COVID-19 symptoms, people should seek the help of their GP or healthcare team, particularly if new symptoms arise or symptoms worsen.

People can also free call or text 1737 anytime of the day or night to speak with a trained counsellor.

There are also online support groups for people experiencing long COVID-19 including:

* Facebook group '[New Zealand Covid Long-Haulers](https://www.facebook.com/groups/308080550429147Facebook/)’ or this link <https://tinyurl.com/3f3wdr8p> and
* Twitter [@LongCovidNZ](https://twitter.com/LongCovidNZ)

Work is underway globally to carry out studies of people after their initial COVID-19 illness. These studies will be used to develop further guidance for patient care.

**End of information about: Long COVID**