

Post COVID-19 condition

FACT SHEET

1. Definition

Post COVID-19 condition occurs in individuals with a history of probable or confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection, usually 3 months from the onset of COVID-19 with symptoms that last for at least 2 months and cannot be explained by an alternative diagnosis. Common symptoms include fatigue, shortness of breath, cognitive dysfunction, but also others, which generally have an impact on everyday functioning. Symptoms may be new onset, following initial recovery from an acute COVID-19 episode, or persist from the initial illness. Symptoms may also fluctuate or relapse over time. A separate definition may be applicable for children (1).

Beside post COVID-19 condition, other terms are also used, such as long COVID, chronic COVID-19 syndrome and post-acute sequelae of COVID-19, however, there are differences.

3. Symptoms

Post COVID-19 condition can affect several body systems and a range of symptoms have been reported. The most common symptoms are listed here.

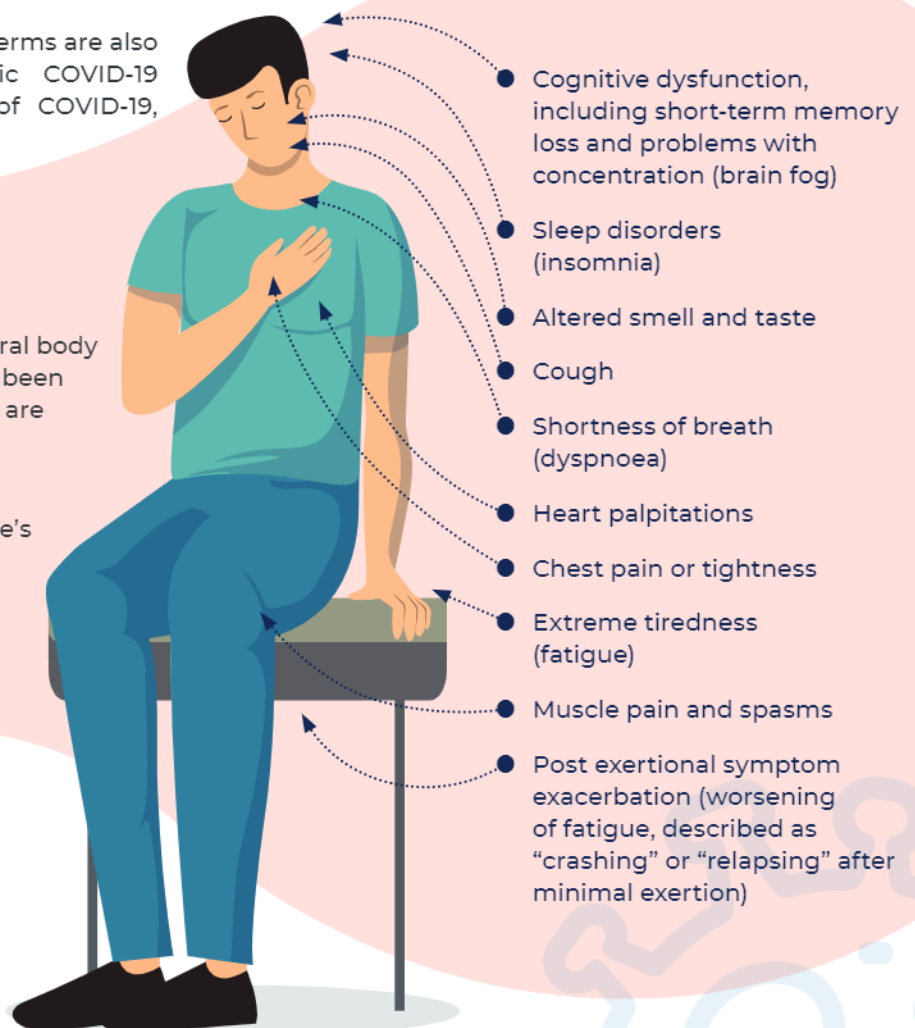
As post COVID-19 condition is new, our understanding of it, how it affects people's health, and potential safe and effective treatments, is limited but evolving.

4. Who is affected?

Post COVID-19 condition can arise irrespective of the severity of the initial COVID-19 symptoms, the variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus or age. Many people living with post COVID-19 condition were previously fit and healthy.

2. How common is post COVID-19 condition?

Approximately 10–20% of COVID-19 patients experience lingering symptoms following an acute SARS-CoV-2 infection. As there have been millions of cases of COVID-19 in the European Region, the number of patients with the post COVID-19 condition is substantial.



5. Risk groups

Anyone who becomes ill with COVID-19 can develop the post COVID-19 condition, regardless of their sex, age or the severity of their initial COVID-19 infection.

6. Impact

Although most people recover with time, many with the post COVID-19 condition are unable to fully return to their day-to-day activities, such as work, education, caring responsibilities or hobbies, for a significant period. This can have a serious impact on their lives and livelihoods, and those of their families.

The post covid-19 condition can directly and indirectly affect mental health. Prolonged suffering and distress due to post COVID-19 condition can impact psychological wellbeing. WHO continues to work with partners and patient groups to accelerate research and develop clinical best practice on rehabilitation.

7. Support

People with post COVID-19 condition can be supported with help from their families, peers, employers and the community. People with post COVID-19 condition can also benefit from tailored rehabilitation. For guidance on rehabilitation, please refer to the patient leaflet [Support for rehabilitation: self-management after COVID-19-related illness](#) (2).

8. Data collection

From 1 January 2022, the ICD code for post COVID-19 condition changed from ICD-10 to ICD-11. Correctly coding patients with post COVID-19 condition will help improve the estimation of the disease burden.

Find out more

WHO Post-Covid-19 Condition resource page: <https://www.who.int/teams/health-care-readiness/post-covid-19-condition>.

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): post COVID-19 condition – QA, 16 December 2021, [https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/coronavirus-disease-\(covid-19\)-post-covid-19-condition](https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/coronavirus-disease-(covid-19)-post-covid-19-condition).

References

1. A clinical case definition of post COVID-19 condition by a Delphi consensus, 6 October 2021. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2021 (https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-2019-nCoV-Post_COVID-19_condition-Clinical_case_definition-2021.1).
2. Support for rehabilitation: self-management after COVID-19-related illness: second edition. Copenhagen: World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe; 2021 (<https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/344472/WHO-EURO-2021-855-40590-59892-eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>).