

HOW DOES COVID-19 AFFECT REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH?



LONG COVID ESSENTIALS: A SERIES BY The Sick Times × LONG COVID JUSTICE

COVID-19 can cause reproductive health issues for many people. This can happen even for people who didn't have any issues prior to COVID-19. COVID-19 can affect reproductive health systems for all genders and can seriously impact people's lives.

* SYMPTOMS

For people born with a **uterus and ovaries**, possible complications include:

- Complications with ovarian tissue function
- Complications maintaining a pregnancy, such as miscarriage or stillbirth
- Complications during pregnancy, such as changes in breathing patterns or blood flow
- Complications after giving birth, such as fatigue and joint stiffness
- Complications with bleeding patterns and menstrual cycles
- Complications with memory, fatigue, and perimenopausal symptoms

For people born with a **penis and testes**, possible complications include:

- Complications maintaining an erection
- Complications to sperm quality
- Changes to testosterone levels

These issues can affect sexual health, reproductive health, ability to engage in and enjoy sexual activity, fertility, and overall health status.

Although we don't fully understand how or why COVID-19 affects the reproductive health systems, scientists have these theories:

- For pregnant people, COVID-19 can trigger autoimmune responses, in which the immune system mistakenly attacks healthy cells.
- Endocrine and blood vessel issues can occur from COVID-19.
- Viral reactivation – a virus can sometimes cause another virus that is dormant in the body to be re-activated.

Further research is needed to better understand how COVID-19 impacts reproductive health. Scientists are still learning about potential symptoms and complications.

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* SYMPTOM MANAGEMENT

Some tips and guidelines:

- Track your health concerns [with an app, diary, or journal](#).
- Schedule an appointment with your primary care provider, obstetrician, gynecologist, urologist, or endocrinologist.
- Ask your healthcare provider for any bloodwork or examinations that can be done to assess your baseline health, such as a complete metabolic panel (CMP), Vitamin D and B12 levels, a thyroid panel, or a complete blood count (CBC).

Talking about reproductive health issues can be quite hard and even traumatizing at times. While these topics might be scary, it is important for you to be honest with your healthcare provider about your concerns.

If you feel your healthcare provider does not take your concerns seriously, it's important to find a provider who believes you. [Other resources in this series](#) discuss how to find doctors and navigate care.

* RESOURCES

There are [many COVID-19 and Long COVID support and advocacy groups](#) you can connect with virtually and/or locally. Support groups specific to reproductive health concerns can be hard to find. Looking at social media or COVID-conscious websites might be helpful.

Other resources include:

- [A literature review](#): detailed discussions about impacts of Long COVID for people with a uterus and ovaries
- [A review article](#): to learn about COVID-19 and erectile dysfunction
- [Postpartum health realities](#): how COVID-19 can affect pregnancy and postpartum health

* **FULL SERIES OF FACTSHEETS WITH LINKED RESOURCES + MORE:**

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* **QUESTIONS?** connect@s4hi.org

This series was designed by people living with Long COVID and associated diseases. Each resource sheet has been reviewed by patient and medical experts. This is an informational resource, not medical advice. Publication date: 9/16/2024.