

WHAT IS LONG COVID?



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

Long COVID is a set of health issues after someone has COVID-19. These could be: new health issues, ongoing issues, or worsening of previous symptoms or conditions. Long COVID is a biological disease that affects hundreds of millions of people around the world. It can cause significant disability and can be fatal. It is a continuing health crisis.

Long COVID is [an “umbrella” term](#). This means it can include many symptoms as well as other diseases or medical diagnoses. It can affect all parts of the body. It affects people in all age groups, races and ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations. People with or without prior health issues can develop the disease. It can happen after asymptomatic or mild infection.

For more information about the wide range of Long COVID symptoms, see other resources in this series. [A 2024 report by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine](#) also has more information.

Scientists are studying how Long COVID occurs. **They think these factors play a role:**

1. **Autoimmunity** – COVID-19 could cause the immune system to become overactive and attack your body.
2. **Viral persistence** – SARS-CoV-2 is the virus that causes COVID-19. Pieces of the virus may remain in the body long after acute infection. These pieces aren't contagious, but can cause symptoms.
3. **Viral reactivation** – Sometimes a virus can cause other viruses that are dormant (not causing harm) in the body to “wake up,” including Epstein Barr virus, which causes mono.

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* SYMPTOM MANAGEMENT

There are no cures for Long COVID, but some treatments might help improve certain symptoms, or bring relief or ease. Learning about other chronic diseases that overlap with Long COVID may help you, as there are recognized therapies for many of these diseases.

These overlapping diseases can include:

- Dysautonomia (including postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome, POTS)
- Myalgic encephalomyelitis, also called chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS)
- Ehlers-Danlos syndrome (hEDS)
- Mast cell activation syndrome (MCAS)
- Diabetes
- High cholesterol
- Heart disease

Long COVID can [change over time](#). Symptoms can come and go. To help manage and reduce symptoms, some people [use a technique called pacing](#).

* RESOURCES

There are [many COVID-19 and Long COVID support and advocacy groups](#) (online & more).

Other resources include:

- [The Long Covid Survival Guide](#): stories and advice from people with Long COVID
- [Long COVID Physio](#): videos and guides in many languages
- [Employers guide](#): for managers supporting employees with Long COVID
- [How others can help](#): tips for supportive loved ones and community members
- [Long COVID definition](#): detailed report and one-page summaries in different languages for medical providers
- [Long-term health effects](#): detailed report and summaries about potentially-disabling symptoms

* FULL SERIES OF FACTSHEETS WITH LINKED RESOURCES + MORE:

tiny.cc/LCE or scan the QR code with your phone camera



* 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.