

# Common long COVID symptoms

DR ZUBAIR KHALED HUQ

Long COVID is not medically definitive but a term that describes a portion of the population struggling with symptoms for weeks or months after being infected with COVID-19, not just those who were seriously ill.

Fatigue is the most common, but breathlessness, chest tightness, brain fog, gastrointestinal issues, joint pain, headaches, and vertigo are other reported manifestations, ranging from mild to debilitating. For many, the psychological effects are profound. Some people are still suffering symptoms seven months after infection, and those who had a mild illness at the start can have worse ongoing symptoms than patients who needed intensive care treatment. Meanwhile, some people are living with symptoms that move around the body.

Researchers from the National Institute for Health Research who reviewed the available evidence said ongoing symptoms examined reports from people of all ages and backgrounds. While most cases of coronavirus resolve in 3-4 weeks, long COVID is a reality for a lot of COVID-19 patients. Also referred to as post-COVID. It can last for several weeks and impact recovery in the long run.



Post-multiplication viral debris can cause fatigue. The body's response to a virus can be overdriven, tiring the system. Some say fatigue and exhaustion take the longest to recover from infection. So, give your body plenty of rest and fluids to re-energise it. Maintain a healthy diet and avoid chores after recovery. Working too hard will only worsen the situation. After COVID fatigue, people experience lethargy, muscle ache, pain and exhaustion.

Again, increased inflammation in the body from COVID-19 can

cause body pain. Muscle pain is caused by virus-induced damage to muscle fibres and abnormal tissue breakdown in some COVID patients. Cough, one of the most common COVID symptoms, can last for five to six weeks or longer if the virus is still present in the upper respiratory tract.

Coughing can be dry and productive, causing more stress to the respiratory tract and throat. Steam inhalation, saltwater gargles, herbal teas, and a vitamin-C-rich diet can help you recover faster. Shortness of breath or pain or discomfort while

breathing can indicate worsening COVID symptoms. It may be a long-term issue affecting their quality of life for many long-haulers.

Brain fog, confusion, delirium are some of the common ways COVID-19 could impact your brain and make it age by at least ten years, studies say. They also make for some of the most commonly recognised post-COVID symptoms, which could degrade the quality of life for some with severe symptoms.

Many people believe that brain fog and other symptoms of post-

COVID brain damage are signs of mental illness, which is why doctors stress the importance of post-COVID brain checks and exercises. Insomnia or chronic sleep issues are another common COVID-19 symptom; nearly half of the recovered patients complain the same. Psychiatrists are also seeing recovered patients with sleep issues, fear and panic, leading to sleepless nights. Meditation, calming teas, and rest can help reduce stress and rehabilitation. If these issues become too frequent, patients should seek help.

People who suffer from anosmia and loss of taste find it challenging to regain this vital function for weeks or months. Smell training is a non-pharmaceutical therapy that helps patients regain their smell and taste. Long covid is not just people recovering from intensive care. Even mild infections can cause severe health issues.

To conserve energy, avoid overdoing it and get plenty of rest. Think about what you need to do and what can be put off, and plan your days accordingly. If you are not recovering as quickly as you would like, ask your hospital team or doctor for assistance.

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## DIET



### Healthy diet for your heart

TAHSIN BINTE MAKSUD

When it comes to a healthy heart, diet is a daily routine. A healthy lifestyle, especially a healthy diet, can help prevent heart disease. The Mediterranean Diet may support a healthy heart. It is a diet influenced by Mediterranean eating habits. The American Heart Association recommends this diet as a healthy eating plan.

The Mediterranean diet is characterised by a high intake of vegetables, fruits, and olive oil and a moderate protein intake. A diet rich in plant-based foods is a good start. Fish, seafood, dairy, and poultry are moderated. Olive oil is the primary source of monounsaturated fatty acids.

So, start using extra virgin olive oil instead of other fats today to lower your cholesterol. Take desserts made with fresh fruits and low-fat yogurt. Begin eating the '5 A DAY' pattern of fruits and vegetables. The campaign is based on the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommendations to eat at least 400 grams of fruits and vegetables per day to reduce the risk of severe health issues like heart disease, stroke, and cancer.

Every day is a new beginning, a new opportunity to get stronger, to eat better, to be healthier and to be the best version of yourself.

The writer is a medical student at Cumilla Medical College.

## HEALTH bulletin



### Chronic opioid users are at excess risk for initiating injection drug use

The opioid epidemic is driven largely by use or misuse of prescription oral opioids, but injection drug use also has increased in recent years. Qualitative studies suggest that injection drug use in prescription opioid users might be precipitated by events such as developing tolerance or interrupted access to medications.

To assess the association between long term prescription opioid treatment medically dispensed for non-cancer pain and the initiation of injection drug use (IDU) among individuals without a history of substance use, Canadian investigators evaluated a retrospective cohort of almost 60,000 patients without cancer but with periods of chronic prescription opioid use between 2000 and 2015.

These patients were matched to patients with periods of episodic use, acute use, or no use during the same interval. After adjustment, initiation of injection drug use was 8 times more common among patients with chronic opioid use than among those with no use. Such initiation was more frequent among younger patients and those using higher opioid doses.

The authors of the research published in the British Medical Journal caution that chronic prescription opioids should not be involuntarily tapered or discontinued. Clinicians should be alert to initiation of injection drug use among chronic opioid users, particularly those who are younger or using higher opioid doses.

## Manage your osteoarthritis of knee

DR JAGODISH CHANDRA GHOSH

Osteoarthritis affects millions of older adults globally. Knee, hip, hand, and foot joints are commonly affected. It causes knee pain and stiffness, but it can also cause severe disability and loss of quality of life, especially in the elderly. Gradually, it is becoming clear that osteoarthritis is not just a mechanical or age-related condition. Certain factors accelerate the disease, such as diet, trauma, and other comorbidities.

Although older adults usually suffer from osteoarthritis, young people can also get it. It may be familial or acquired (injury, infection, overweight).

The following common risk factors increase the chance of developing arthritis and the severity of the disease.

- Osteoarthritis is directly connected to wear and tear on joints. More than one-third of adults over the age of 65 have symptoms of osteoarthritis (OA). The ability of cartilage to heal decreases as the persons get older.
- Weight increases the pressure on all joints, especially the knees. Every pound increase in weight adds three to four pounds to the knee.
- Genetic mutations make a person more likely to develop osteoarthritis. It may be due to inherited abnormalities in the shape of the bone that surrounds the joints.
- Women aged 55 years and older are more likely than men to develop osteoarthritis.
- People with jobs that need a lot of stress on joints, such as kneeling, squatting or lifting heavy weights (55 pounds), are more likely to



develop osteoarthritis because of constant pressure on joints.

- Athletes involved in soccer, tennis or long-distance running may be at higher risk of developing knee osteoarthritis in later life.

• For people with rheumatoid arthritis, certain metabolic disorders such as an iron overload or excess growth hormone are at a higher risk of osteoarthritis.

Changing your lifestyle can help improve joint health and prevent osteoarthritis.

- Regular moderate exercise strengthens joints and can decrease the risk of osteoarthritis. It can help maintain healthy joints, reduce pain and fatigue, relieve joint stiffness, and increase muscle and bone strength. Excess weight puts extra stress on joints, speeding the deterioration of joint cartilage. Losing weight also helps to reduce pain and improve symptoms.

- After a prolonged sitting, journey or work, the joints involved become swollen or achy, rest them and try to avoid using a swollen joint for at least 12-24 hours which will reduce the risk of developing OA in future.

• High glucose levels can speed up the formation of molecules that make cartilage stiff; it also triggers inflammation that can accelerate cartilage damage. Keeping diabetes under control can help to prevent OA.

- Food heated in very high temperature, grilled or even pasteurised a toxin known as advanced glycation end product appears which can damage specific protein enhancing damage to the tissue.

There is no such cure to osteoarthritis except maintaining lifestyle modifications.

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## Make up for vitamin D deficiency

ZAHID BIN SULTAN

Vitamin D is a fat-soluble vitamin that promotes calcium absorption in the gut and maintains adequate serum calcium and phosphate for healthy bones, teeth and muscles. Now-a-days, vitamin D deficiency is a silent and neglected global public health problem. Almost one billion people worldwide suffer from vitamin D deficiency or insufficiency.

Vitamin D deficiency symptoms have been linked to different health problems, including heart disease, depression, and cancer. Signs you are not getting enough vitamin D are -- bone softening of fractures, fatigue and generalized weakness, muscle cramps, joint and bone pain, impaired wound healing, dizziness, anxiety, hair loss.

To fulfil the deficiency of vitamin D, the following measures can be adopted:

- Go out in the sun
- Take vitamin D rich food every day, for example-mushrooms, liver, meat, fish, liver oil, shrimp, egg yolk, oatmeal.
- Take supplements by consulting with doctors
- Routinely test the 25-hydroxy vitamin D blood.
- Spending enough time in the sun and eating vitamin D rich food is the best way to get a daily dose of vitamin D. Only eating vitamin D rich food is insufficient to fulfil your daily dose.

Check your vitamin D level twice a year and consult with your health care professional before taking a vitamin D supplement.

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