

Post-COVID Syndrome

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The condition known as Post-COVID Syndrome, or 'Long Covid', is having a debilitating effect on people's lives. The focus has been on saving lives during the pandemic, but there is now a growing recognition that people are facing long-term consequences of a Covid infection.



What is Post-COVID Syndrome?

Post-COVID syndrome is defined by NICE as: 'signs and symptoms that develop during or following an infection consistent with COVID-19 which continue for more than 12 weeks and are not explained by an alternative diagnosis.'

What are the symptoms?

The condition usually presents with clusters of symptoms, often overlapping, which may change or develop over time and can affect any system within the body:

- Respiratory symptoms and conditions such as chronic cough, shortness of breath, lung inflammation and fibrosis, and pulmonary vascular disease;
- Cardiovascular symptoms and disease such as chest tightness, acute myocarditis and heart failure;
- Protracted loss or change of smell and taste;
- Mental health problems including depression, anxiety and cognitive difficulties;
- Inflammatory disorders such as myalgia, multisystem inflammatory syndrome, Guillain-Barre syndrome, or neuralgic amyotrophy;
- Gastrointestinal disturbance with diarrhoea;
- Continuing headaches;
- Fatigue, weakness and sleeplessness;
- Liver and kidney dysfunction;
- Clotting disorders and thrombosis;
- Lymphadenopathy;
- Skin rashes.

Treatment options for Post-COVID Syndrome

Most cases of Post-COVID Syndrome will be managed in the primary care setting under the care of a GP. Many patients recover spontaneously with holistic support, rest, symptomatic treatment, and gradual increase in activity.



The BMJ has written an article about the management of post-acute Covid-19 giving helpful advice for the self management of respiratory problems such as breathlessness and a prolonged cough, which are common following a Covid diagnosis. It is thought that breathing control exercises can be beneficial. More information can be found at www.bmj.com/content/370/bmj.m3026



The NHS has set up a website called 'Your COVID Recovery': www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk. It provides helpful information and support for individuals affected by Covid-19, their family, friends and carers. It can help people to understand what has happened and what someone might expect as part of the ongoing recovery. It has a section called 'Managing the Effects'. This is broken down into two parts focusing on the body and the mind.

For each of the individual symptoms that someone experiences, it may be that more specialist input is necessary and the type of treatment available may vary.



For respiratory and cardiovascular symptoms, the patient may be referred to a Cardiologist for various tests and scans. In some instances, surgery may be required.



For symptoms such as inflammatory disorders, fatigue and weakness they may be referred to a therapist to have physiotherapy or osteopathy. There are support groups and rehabilitation programmes available for people with Post-Covid Syndrome and the patients' GP will be able to advise of relevant services available in their area.



Mental health issues as a result of contracting Covid-19 may be treated by a mental health professional such as a psychotherapist or counsellor. Treatment such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) may be beneficial.

For those suffering with ongoing breathing difficulties, the following information and support is available from Asthma UK and the British Lung Foundation www.post-covid.org.uk/get-support

How WPA can support Post-COVID Syndrome

Health and Wellbeing Helplines

Alongside access to private healthcare, there is additional support available from WPA's Health and Wellbeing Helplines. For Group Schemes, this is included within the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) benefit option.

This is a confidential service, available 24/7, 365 days a year for WPA members and their families with these benefits included in their Policy/ Group Scheme.

Wellbeing and
Health Information

Debt and Money
Information

Legal
Information

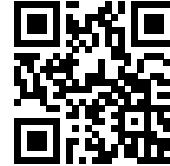
Telephone
Counselling

Online computerised Cognitive Behaviour
Therapy (cCBT) Life Skills Course

How to claim for Long Covid

Any member who wishes to seek treatment for Long Covid can contact the WPA Helpdesk who will assist in setting up a claim, or they can go online or use the WPA Health app.

Scan the QR code to download WPA Health, available on iOS and Android.



Claims for a condition experienced as a result of contracting Covid-19 will be treated the same as any other claim and reviewed in line with the applicable terms and conditions of the relevant Policy/ Group Scheme. Given the nature of the condition, Long Covid claims may likely fall within the long-term (chronic) condition category rather than an acute condition. An additional 'Long-term conditions' cash benefit is available as an Optional Extra on some Corporate policies.

Face to Face Counselling

WPA's Group Schemes and Corporate Cash Plans have a Face to Face Counselling Optional Extra.

Provides up to six sessions of face to face or structured telephone counselling for employees, where it is clinically appropriate and feasible to work on their issues within the Short Term Brief Counselling Model.



For information about your WPA health insurance contact your Intermediary or WPA

0800 783 0 784

wpa.org.uk