Longer-term effects of COVID-19 (long COVID)

What is long COVID? 🔍

Most people's symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) get better within 4 weeks.
But for some people, symptoms can last longer, or new ones can develop.
Symptoms can also change over time and can affect anywhere in the body.
This has been referred to as long COVID.

Healthcare professionals may refer to long COVID as:
- Ongoing symptomatic COVID-19 (4 to 12 weeks)
- Post-COVID-19 syndrome (over 12 weeks)

Contact your GP practice if:
- You're worried about your symptoms
- Your symptoms are getting worse

Common symptoms and how to manage them

Fatigue 🔍

During your recovery from any illness, including coronavirus, you may experience fatigue.
Fatigue means you have less physical, mental and emotional energy to do daily activities,
like talking, moving around or making decisions.

Tip: Try to break your day into small parts and set easy goals to begin with.
Rest between activities and only do what you feel able to do.

Breathlessness 🔍

You may get short of breath more easily. This can happen even if you haven't
needed treatment in hospital for coronavirus. Breathlessness can feel scary,
but there are several things you can do to help.

Tip: Try breathing in before you start to move, then breathing out when you make
a big effort, such as bending down, lifting heavy things, or going up stairs.

Cough 🔍

Some viral infections, including coronavirus, can leave you with a dry cough because
your lungs have been irritated. Some may have a cough with phlegm.

Tip: Make sure you keep yourself well hydrated by drinking small amounts often
throughout the day. If you feel yourself starting to cough, take small sips of liquid.

Muscle and joint pain 🔍

You may experience pain after coronavirus.

Tip: Try to pace yourself. If your pain is stopping you completing a task you can try
again later. It can be hard to relax, but doing something you enjoy will help you feel
good and reduce the stress of pain.

Sleep problems 🔍

It's common to sleep more when your body is fighting an infection. While you're recovering,
it's also common to have disturbed sleep patterns.

Tip: Get ready for bed at the same time each night, avoid screens for at least two hours
before bed, and don't have tea or coffee before going to sleep. If you're struggling to drift
off, try getting up and relaxing in another room until you feel tired again.

Low mood, depression and anxiety 🔍

Being unwell can have an impact on your mental health. You may feel low in mood,
have difficulty concentrating or have feelings of worry and panic.

Tip: Try to stick to a daily routine, limit alcohol intake and maintain a well-balanced diet.
Talk to friends and family about how you are feeling. If your symptoms aren't improving
after a couple of weeks, speak to your GP.

Further information and support

If you're worried about your symptoms, don't struggle alone.
Find out more about recovery from long COVID, at **NHSinform.scot/long-covid**
or call the NHS inform helpline on **0800 22 44 88**.

NHS SCOTLAND

Healthier Scotland
Scottish Government