

Frequently Asked Questions - Patients

Long COVID Symptoms or Health Concerns for Patients

A. General information

What is Long COVID?

- Some people have physical and mental health problems for weeks or months after having COVID-19. This is sometimes called “Long COVID”, “Post COVID”, “Post COVID-19 Syndrome” or “Post COVID-19 Condition”.

How many people get Long COVID?

- We are collecting information in Alberta, from other provinces, and from around the world about Long COVID. Some research studies show that about 10% of people who had COVID-19 have symptoms for 12 weeks or longer, but that number might be as high as 25%.

Why do some people get Long COVID?

- We don't know why some people have symptoms for weeks or months and some do not. Research is ongoing.
- Long COVID can affect anyone – old or young, people who are healthy, and people with or without other health problems. It can happen if you were hospitalized for COVID-19 or if you only had mild symptoms.

What are the most common signs of Long COVID?

- People may have one or more problems in the following areas:

Breathing / Respiratory:

- Feeling short of breath
- Cough that won't go away
- Stuffy nose (congestion)

Pain:

- Joint and/or muscle pain
- [Sore throat](#)
- [Headaches](#)

Eyes / Ears:

- [Changes to your vision](#)
- [Changes to your hearing](#)
- [Ringing in your ears](#) (tinnitus)

Weakness / fatigue:

- Feeling very weak and/or tired
- Feeling worse after activity
- Sleeping difficulties

Eating / Digestion:

- Difficulty eating, drinking, swallowing
- Loss of taste and/or smell
- [Diarrhea](#), [constipation](#), [nausea and vomiting](#)

Mental health symptoms:

- Brain fog / thinking changes
- Trouble with memory and/or concentration
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Stress

Other physical symptoms:

- [Fast or irregular heart beat](#)
- [Fever \(doesn't go away or comes and goes\)](#)
- [Feeling dizzy](#)
- [Skin rash](#)

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How long will I have Long COVID problems?

- Because Long COVID is so new, it is hard to predict how it will affect each person. Most people get better after a number of weeks of dealing with their problems using information and services to help them. For some people, the problems are more serious and last much longer.

Are people with Long COVID still contagious?

- It is not likely that a person who has been cleared of their original COVID-19 infection is still contagious. However, ongoing Public Health preventive measures should be followed. If a person develops new problems that could be COVID-19, they should isolate and get tested, even if they have gotten the vaccine.

B. When and where to find help

When should I call 9-1-1 or go to the Emergency Department?

- If you are having a medical emergency, which may include:
 - Having trouble breathing (hard to catch your breath, only able to say 1 word at a time)
 - having a hard time waking up
 - feeling very confused
 - passing out or fainting
 - having chest pain

When should I see my doctor?

- Getting better after COVID-19 is different for everyone. It is important to see your doctor if you:
 - are worried about your recovery
 - feel short of breath and it's not getting better, no matter what you try
 - feel very short of breath doing things that are usually easy for you
 - find that your attention, memory, thinking, or energy levels are not getting better
 - have problems that stop you from doing your regular activities or make them hard to do - for example, taking caring for yourself or going back to work or school
 - feel depressed, anxious, or stressed and this feeling isn't getting better

How can I get information and help if I have signs of Long COVID?

- Everyone is different, especially when it comes to COVID-19. Most people can take care of their own recovery from Long COVID, but others may need more care. The following list includes the options to help you take care of your own symptoms:
 - A **self-management resource** has been made for people living in Alberta. It can be found on the [MyHealth.Alberta.ca](https://myhealth.alberta.ca) website. You can search the page based on what problem(s) you are having. This resource is available in 11 languages.

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- **Information for patients** is posted on the AHS website called "[Getting Healthy after COVID-19](#)". This site will be updated on a regular basis so that it has the most up to date information on it.
- The [Rehabilitation Advice Line](#) (1-833-379-0563) is a telephone service that gives free rehabilitation advice and general health information for people living in Alberta who are over 18 years of age, including people with signs of Long COVID. Occupational therapists and physiotherapists provide information on activities and exercises that help with physical problems.
- **Health Link** (8-1-1) is another telephone option that provides free advice from nurses, pharmacists, and dietitians along with general health information. This line is open 24-hours a day, including holidays.
- **Mental Health Help Line** (1-877-303-2642) gives free confidential and anonymous advice about mental health programs and services. This line is open 24 hours a day, including holidays. More mental health resources can be found on the webpage: [COVID-19 Mental Health Resources | Alberta Health Services](#).
- Contact your **family doctor or healthcare team** for help getting the right type of information and/or care to help with your recovery.
- "**Supporting Your Recovery after COVID-19**" education classes are available through the Alberta Healthy Living Program. You can register online [here](#) or call 403-943-2584.
- Consider joining an **online forum** on Facebook and Twitter to connect with others who are experiencing Long COVID symptoms.

I live in a small community. Will I be able to get the same help as someone living in a big city?

- Doctors and healthcare workers across Alberta (including family doctors and community care providers) are getting information about how to care for people who have signs of Long COVID.
- Using virtual care is something that is also being looked into.
- There are clinics that specialize in Long COVID but are only available in Calgary and Edmonton at this time. Your doctor or other healthcare worker will decide if you need to be seen at a specialized clinic.

My health care team is suggesting that I receive treatment (physical, occupational, respiratory etc.) but I can't afford to pay for months of treatment. What can I do?

- Most people with Long COVID can take care of their own problems as they recover. All of the information listed above in the "How can I get information" section are available to people living in Alberta, free of charge.
- Talk to your doctor or healthcare team about other services that are available in your local area at no cost or reduced cost.

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C. Vaccination

If I think I have Long COVID should I still get vaccinated?

- Alberta Health Services suggests that people get vaccinated as soon as they are eligible according to [Alberta's COVID-19 vaccine program](#), whether they have already had COVID-19 or not. If you have questions about the vaccine or your health, talk to your family physician or healthcare team.
- Some people find that their symptoms change after vaccination, however, more research is happening to study this.