

Long COVID: What we know and what we need to know

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 School of Public Health

**LONG COVID
INITIATIVE**


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Disclosures

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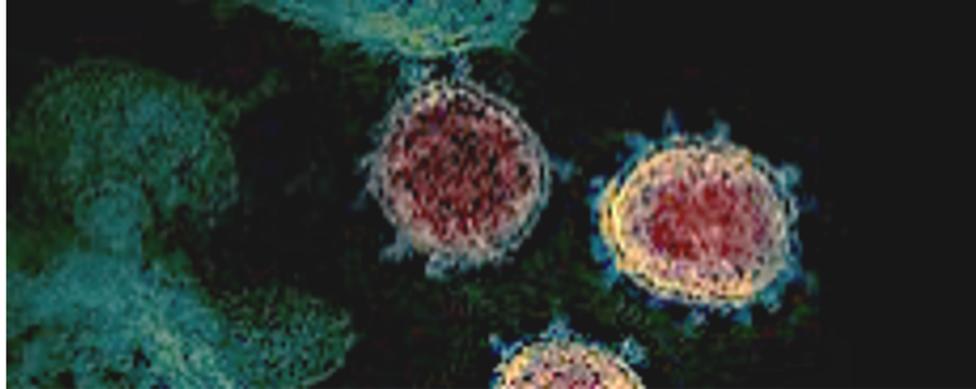
WHO Definition: Long COVID *aka* Post-COVID-19 condition

- Begins < 3 months from the onset of probable or confirmed COVID-19
- Symptoms last 2 months or longer
- No alternate diagnosis

- Common symptoms = fatigue, shortness of breath, cognitive dysfunction, pain, anxiety, poor sleep.¹
- Symptoms highly variable
- Can fluctuate or recover/ relapse

Why?

- Direct effects of the virus that causes COVID-19
- Indirect effects through the immune system (inflammation)
- Other effects – reactivation of EBV? Gut microbes?



Who is at risk for Long COVID?

- Severe acute infection
- Length of hospitalization
- Comorbidities (e.g., diabetes)
- Older age

*Vaccination status²

- Two doses of vaccine halved odds of persistent symptoms (> 4weeks)
- One doses of any vaccine also protective
- Some studies have also shown that vaccination protective after getting Long COVID



¹Lancet Infectious Disease, doi.org/10.1016/S1473-3099(21)00460-6

²UK Health Security Agency, Rapid Evidence Briefing, Jan 2022.

About the Long COVID Initiative

We are using the Initiative website and social media platforms to rapidly communicate research findings, news and expert insights on Long Covid



What are the impacts of Long COVID on disability?

- July 2021: Long Covid could be classified as a disability under the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.
 - Applies to employers with 15+ employees.
 - HHS Guidance: Long COVID = disability if there is a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities
- Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021: 1.2 million more people were identified as having a disability than in 2020, with 65% under the age of 65. ?Long COVID

Key Challenges: (1) No diagnostic test for Long COVID,
(2) Not all cases of COVID are confirmed



What are the financial & economic impacts of Long COVID ?

- Direct financial impact
- Denial of disability benefits
- Insurance coverage: limits on payments for self-reported conditions, coverage for treatments for Long COVID
- Ending pandemic-era programs (supplement income, rent assistance)

Knowledge gap: Understanding the true economic impact of Long COVID.

What are the impacts of Long Covid on the Workforce?

- Around 3-4 million long haulers in the US are unable to work at any given time, 40-60% reducing their hours instead of taking time off¹
- ~1.1 million Americans are estimated to be wholly out of work due to Long COVID²
- ~2.1 million workers are estimated to have reduced their work hours due to Long COVID²



¹www.barrons.com/articles/labor-shortage-workers-millions-sick-long-covid-

²www.brookings.edu/research/is-long-covid-worsening-the-labor-shortage/



Insights from stakeholder groups (Patients)

- Some individuals have been unable to work for months to > 1 year
- Feel dismissed by the the medical community
- Undergo extensive diagnostic testing
- Feel “gaslit” by providers, told pandemic-related anxiety or depression
- Lack of research
- Eager to “feel normal” and return to work

Insights from stakeholder groups (Employers)

- Immediate issues get more attention (e.g., testing, vaccination)
- ADA recognizes Long COVID, but there is limited awareness of Long COVID and how it might impact someone's ability to function
- Need for education around Long COVID for employers and employees
- Research that drives best practice and policy around different workplace scenarios
- Need support systems for all types of workers (including small business employees), particularly those with both physically and mentally challenging roles

Insights from stakeholder groups (Policy)

- Need for more disaggregated data to understand demographic impacts
- Payers, health system leaders and policymakers need an overview of who is being impacted by Long COVID (prevalence and cost).
- Policies unclear on financial support for people with Long COVID (e.g., paid leave)
- Immediate challenge of supporting people currently with Long COVID combined with difficulty of estimating future impact.

(Some) Key questions

- How can we anticipate the ongoing costs?
- How much of the current labor participation / unemployment rates are being driven by Long COVID?
- What resources need to be available to help treat and support employees with Long COVID? Employers?
- And many more

Thank You

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