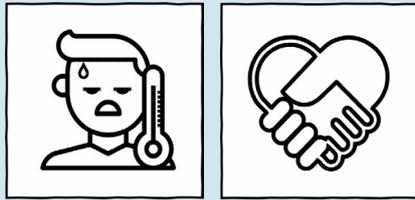


Groundswell

Out of homelessness



Long COVID: what it is and how to get support

A guide for people experiencing homelessness

Updated April 2022

What is long COVID?

Long COVID affects some people who have had COVID-19, including:

- anyone who had COVID-19 symptoms, no matter how mild or severe they were
- those who took a test that confirmed they had COVID-19
- those that had COVID-19 symptoms but did not take a test.

How long it takes to recover from COVID-19 is different for everyone.

Long COVID means your symptoms continue for weeks or months after the COVID-19 infection has gone away.

It's worth seeking medical support if you are still feeling unwell after four weeks.

What are the symptoms of long COVID?

The following are common long COVID symptoms that people continue experiencing, or develop, after having COVID-19. Someone with long COVID may have a few or several of them:

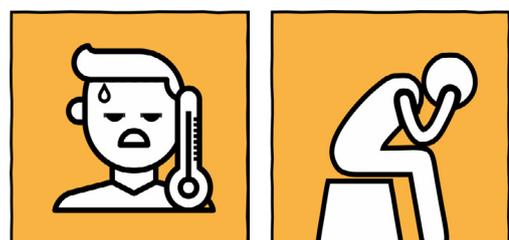
- extreme tiredness (fatigue)
- shortness of breath
- chest pain or tightness
- memory and concentration problems ("brain fog")
- difficulty sleeping (insomnia)
- heart palpitations
- dizziness
- pins and needles
- joint pain
- tinnitus (ringing or noises in ears), earaches
- feeling sick, diarrhoea, stomach aches, loss of appetite
- a high temperature, cough, headaches, sore throat, changes to sense of smell or taste
- rashes

Some people who have long COVID find that feeling unwell for many weeks affects their mental health. While you're recovering, you might find you:

- feel low or depressed
- feel anxious
- feel irritable and angry
- have problems sleeping.

If you think you might have long COVID, try not to worry. **You are not alone and you are entitled to support.**

You can get more information by talking to health staff (such as a GP or nurse) or a support worker if you have one. There are also some other excellent sources of information overleaf.



Top ways to look after yourself

1. If you are still feeling unwell four weeks after having COVID-19, or think you may have long COVID, talk to a GP about it.

They may arrange for you to have some tests and see a special long COVID team, who can support you to look after yourself as you recover.

Everyone has the right to register with a GP:

- You don't need a fixed address.
- You don't need to show identification.
- Your immigration status doesn't matter.

2. Try to attend any health appointments you have

You have the right to access your healthcare appointments. If you have a support or case worker, you can ask them about help getting there or accompanying you to the appointment.

3. Protect yourself and others against COVID-19

It is possible to catch COVID-19 more than once. Keep looking after yourself and others by following the COVID-19 advice:

- open windows when you're around others indoors
- try to avoid contact with others and test yourself if you feel unwell
- if you test positive, try to avoid contact with other people as much as is possible for at least five days. If after five days you still feel unwell, try to continue avoiding contact with others until you feel better.
- wash your hands regularly
- wear a face mask in crowded places.

Having all three doses of the vaccine gives you the best possible protection against catching COVID-19 again. You can get COVID-19 vaccines by:

- Attending a walk-in vaccination site (available for those not registered with a GP). Find your nearest by searching 'find a covid vaccine site' online.
- Booking an appointment by searching 'get a covid vaccine' online.
- A vaccination service may come to your accommodation or a local service – check with them whether this is happening.

If you cannot book appointments online, you can call 119 free of charge. You can speak to a translator if you need to.

4. Look after your mental health

If you feel that long COVID is affecting your mental health, talking to someone about how you're feeling might be helpful – this could be friends, family, support staff, a GP, or volunteers at the Samaritans and Shout (contact details for these organisations are at the end of this leaflet).

Resources

If you do not have access to the internet but have access to a support service or support worker, you could ask them to print this information off for you.

Online

- Asthma + Lung UK have a range of support resources if you are suffering from long COVID: blf.org.uk/support-for-you.
- The NHS website: [nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/long-term-effects-of-coronavirus-long-covid](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/long-term-effects-of-coronavirus-long-covid).
- The NHS Your COVID Recovery website: yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk.
- The Every Mind Matters website has a section to support people with their mental health and wellbeing: [nhs.uk/every-mind-matters](https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters).
- Information and support from mental health charity, Mind: [mind.org.uk/coronavirus](https://www.mind.org.uk/coronavirus).
- Advice from the Samaritans: [samaritans.org/coronavirus](https://www.samaritans.org/coronavirus).

Talk to someone

- The Samaritans are also available to speak to 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, whatever you're going through: Call 116 123 free or email jo@samaritans.org
- Shout 85258 is a free, confidential, anonymous text support service. You can text from wherever you are in the UK on 85258.



This leaflet has been produced as part of an NHSEI-funded Long Covid partnership project. Our project partner, National Voices, is a coalition of health and social care charities that supports a person-centred approach by making what matters to people, matter in health and care.