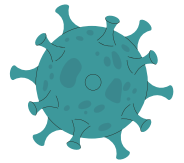


# Long Covid Advice Sheet

Long Covid is a new illness and there are still lots of things we don't know about it. This advice sheet is a starting point for people who think they have Long Covid or have just been diagnosed and are on their journey to recovery.



Patients with Long Covid are reporting a wide range of symptoms. While we cover some of the main ones, we have also signposted some resources at the end of this advice sheet.

This information should be used alongside guidance from your GP or relevant health care professional. It is subject to change as research and treatment for Long Covid continues to develop.

If you remain concerned, please contact your GP practice. For children and teenagers whose symptoms continue for more than four weeks, please contact your GP practice if you haven't already done so.

## How might I feel after having Covid-19?

The length of time that it takes to recover from COVID-19 varies from person to person. For some it will be days, for others, it may be weeks or months.



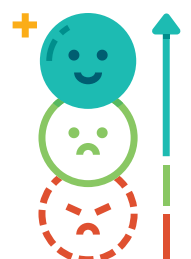
The chances of having long-term symptoms do not seem to be linked to how ill you are when you first get COVID-19. People who had mild symptoms at first can still have long-term problems.

Symptoms include severe tiredness, pain, breathlessness, muscle weakness, coughing and brain fog. The more severe your Long Covid symptoms, the longer it might take for you to return to what is normal for you such as housework, having a wash, getting dressed or walking up and down the stairs.

## Emotional support

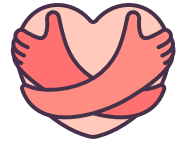
Having COVID-19 can be very frightening and this may have an emotional impact. These are some common difficulties you may experience:

- feeling anxious when breathless
- worries about health or family/friends getting ill
- money / housing / employment worries
- feeling low in mood
- poor sleep



## What can help?

- Try to do activities that you find enjoyable and relaxing
- Focus on what is in your control, such as eating well
- Speak to family and friends
- Don't be too hard on yourself if there are some things that you are finding harder to do, remind yourself that recovery takes time
- Avoid watching too much news or social media if it is making you feel anxious, try limiting yourself to looking at the news once a day
- Consider joining the Covid-19 peer support group to share experiences and tips (details on last page)



## Ways to help you manage your symptoms

### Breathlessness

One of the symptoms of Long Covid is breathlessness. These positions can help ease your breathlessness and can be used when resting or when moving:



**Sitting upright and relaxed**



**Forward lean sitting**



**Forward lean standing**



**Lying on your side propped up**

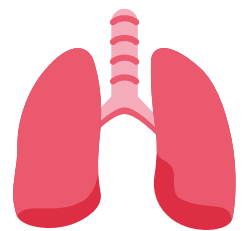


**Backward lean standing**

### Breathing tips

These steps can help you manage your breathlessness and reduce its impact on your everyday activities:

- Take a slow breath in through your nose
- Try to relax your shoulders and neck
- Allow the air to fill up from the bottom of your lungs to the top of your chest
- Breathe out gently
- Keep cool by opening a window if possible and using a wet flannel to cool the area around your nose and mouth this can reduce the sensation of breathlessness.



### Managing your cough

- Stay hydrated - take small sips, one after the other, avoid taking large sips
- To reduce irritation, drink warm honey and lemon or another warm drink, this can help to soothe the throat
- Steam inhalation – pour hot water into a bowl and put your head over the bowl. If comfortable, cover your head and bowl with a towel. As there is a risk of scalding, a child may benefit from sitting in a hot, steamy bathroom instead.



# Ways to help you manage your symptoms

## Fatigue and exhaustion management

Fatigue and exhaustion are the most common symptoms that are experienced in long COVID. It is often described as an overwhelming sense of tiredness which can be physical and mental.

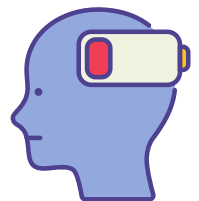
This extreme tiredness stops people from returning to work, cooking or planning a meal, holding and understanding a conversation, and playing with their children. It can also mean you have little motivation to do anything because you get exhausted easily.

### Types of fatigue

**Physical fatigue** - Your body can feel overwhelmingly heavy and moving takes an enormous amount of energy. Certain muscles such as those in your hands and legs may fatigue very easily and this can depend on the activity that you are doing e.g. writing, walking.



**Mental and cognitive fatigue** - It can become difficult to think, concentrate or take in new information and memory and learning may be affected. Some people find even basic word finding and thinking difficult.



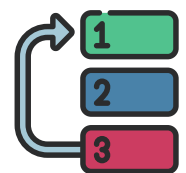
You may feel exhausted after completing a basic task or wake up feeling as tired as they did when they went to sleep.

### What can you do about fatigue?

Your energy levels are likely to change from day to day. Use the '3 Ps' to help manage this:

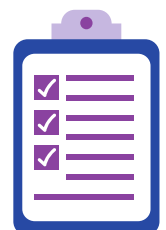
#### 1 Prioritise

- Think about what you want to achieve in your day
- Does it need to be done today?
- What can you ask a family member to help you with?



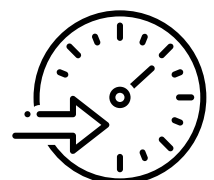
#### 2 Plan

- Gather all the items you will require for the task
- Think about how you can break the task down in small sections
- Think about the time you are at your best to complete the activity
- Plan the activity on a day you have support around you



#### 3 Pace

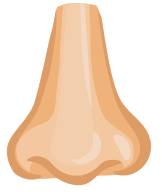
- Allow enough time
- Rest regularly
- Sit and rest where you can



# Ways to help you manage your symptoms

## Taste and smell

From what we know so far, about 1 in 10 cases of smell and taste problems persist after COVID infection. We know from other viruses that about 1 in 3 people will see recovery of their sense of smell over 3 years.



Your sense of smell and taste work together when eating - so when you lose your smell this can also affect the flavour of food.

## What does this mean for me?

- You may find your favourite foods taste and smell differently following your COVID illness. Food may taste bland, salty, sweet or metallic.
- These changes are usually short-term but can affect your appetite and how much you eat.

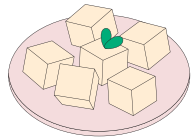
## How can I improve the taste of food?

Choose foods that appeal to you to ensure you eat well. Your taste preferences may change so continue to retry foods.



If you find the smell of cooking affects your appetite, microwaveable ready meals or cold food can be a short-term alternative.

Try different flavours, textures and temperatures of food to see which you find more edible. You may find bland flavours such as plain chicken, fish, tofu and rice may be easier to eat. Cold or room temperature foods may be easier to eat.



Eating protein is important for your recovery however, high protein foods can taste bitter or metallic. Try marinating meats with sweet/sour sauces to change the flavour and try different types of protein to find the most enjoyable one for you. You could try red meat, poultry, fish, egg, cheese, vegetarian meat alternatives, beans and pulses.



Adding strong flavours to food can help with the taste.

Sharp/tart flavoured foods and drinks such as orange, lemon, lime flavours can be useful in balancing very sweet tastes. Sucking boiled sweets and mints may also help refresh your mouth before and after eating.



If foods have a metallic taste, you could try plastic cutlery instead of metal.

Salty or bitter taste changes may be improved by choosing low salt varieties and adding sweet flavours to food or drink, such as sweetener, honey, or sugar.



# Ways to help you manage your symptoms

## Use a diary

Using a diary is useful to track how your energy levels change after activity. This can help you manage your fatigue. The British Lung Foundation have an [activity form](#) on their website you can use.



## Dietary tips

Making healthy food choices, eating a range of fruit and vegetables, drinking enough fluids and avoiding caffeine will help your body in your recovery. If your sense of smell and taste are affecting the way you eat, read our section on tips for dealing with changes to taste and smell.



Eating well is important as your body needs energy, protein, vitamins and minerals to help you recover. Having a good intake of protein and energy rich foods supports you with rebuilding muscles, maintaining your immune system and increasing your energy levels to allow you to do your usual activities.

If you are only eating small amounts or are unable to eat all the recommended food groups then you may wish to consider taking a multivitamin and mineral supplement. If you have been advised to take an oral nutritional supplement drink, these will contain vitamins and minerals.

If you are not well enough to spend time outside regularly, or if you are over 65 or have a darker skin tone, your body may not be able to make enough vitamin D. In these situations, take a daily Vitamin D supplement containing 10 micrograms daily. You can buy these from most supermarkets and pharmacies.

Visit the NHS long covid recovery website eating well section for further information. You can also contact your GP practice for advice on nutrition.

The [NHS Eatwell guide](#) can support you in making good food choices.

- drink enough fluids – water is best
- fresh oranges, peppers, broccoli, potatoes, berries and good sources of Vitamin C
- green, berries, pulses, grains, nuts, seeds
- seafood, nuts, seeds, whole grains
- oily fish, eggs, cheese, milk, mushrooms
- avoid caffeine such as coffee and fizzy drinks

# Where can I get more help and advice?

## Websites

- Visit the [Greater Manchester While You Wait website](#).
- You may also find useful resources and advice on the **NHS Your Covid recovery website** - [www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk](http://www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk)
- The [British Lung Foundation website](#) has further great advice on breathlessness, breathing tips and managing your cough.
- For mental health support, you can visit the [Greater Manchester Mental Health website](#) or call their 24/7 support line - **0800 953 0285**

## Groups and courses

**Long Covid Peer Support Group** - This support group is available for residents across Greater Manchester. The online meeting takes place on Wednesday evenings from 6pm to 7pm. A WhatsApp group is also available for people to continue conversations throughout the week. Expenses are available to support people to join the Peer Support Group online. To join please email [val.bayliss-brideaux@nhs.net](mailto:val.bayliss-brideaux@nhs.net) or text - **0770 266 8169**.

**Expert Patients Programme** - This is a free course run by Manchester Foundation Trust to help anyone who lives with or cares for someone with a long-term health condition to stay well. It will help you to

- Manage physical and emotional difficulties
- Develop a partnership with your healthcare professionals
- Plan ahead with support from the team
- Increase your motivation and feel more positive

The programme is run by trained tutors who are people with experience of self-managing a long term condition. It takes place over six weekly sessions which are once a week for 2.5 hours at local venues throughout Manchester. For information on course venues across Manchester or to find out more, please contact the Expert Patients Programme Team on **0161 371 2105** or email [mft.epp@nhs.net](mailto:mft.epp@nhs.net)

**If you continue to feel overwhelmed, please contact your GP practice.  
In an emergency please call 999.**

