

Factsheet: long COVID in children and young people

What is long COVID?

Long COVID is the name for signs and symptoms that go on for more than 4 weeks after a COVID-19 infection and are not caused by a different illness.

How common is it?

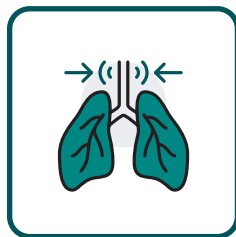
COVID-19 infection is usually mild in children and does not last long. However, between 13% and 15% of children who have had COVID-19 can still have at least one symptom 5 weeks later.

What are the symptoms of long COVID in children?

There are many possible symptoms, and a child might have one or more. Symptoms can come and go over time. The most common symptoms are:



Fatigue (extreme tiredness)



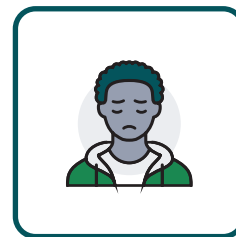
Trouble with breathing normally



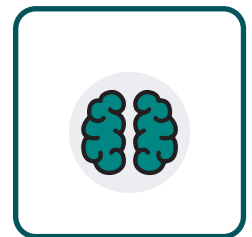
Cough



Trouble sleeping



Feeling anxious or depressed



Difficulty thinking and concentrating

A child with Long COVID might have trouble with everyday activities that they used to do. This includes things like:



Sitting up for a length of time



Doing daily tasks



Concentrating



Having control over their emotions



Having conversations

Doing normal things like going to school, going out or spending time with friends can become extremely difficult.

How long does it take to recover?

It can take either weeks or many months to recover. Recovery doesn't always happen in a straight line. It is normal to have ups and downs. However, if symptoms are not improving, or are getting worse, you should seek help and advice from a GP (family doctor).

What can parents and carers do to help recovery?

- Talk to a GP for advice and support.
- Start small. This could be as little as sitting up or concentrating for 2 minutes, with plenty of rest in between, and ensuring that the child is showing improvements for a while before increasing.
- Keep a diary of symptoms and recovery. This can help keep track and be useful for communicating with professionals.

Who can help?



GP:

They can discuss the problems with you, helping you get treatment and support. It's important to tell them if symptoms are getting worse, or no better. If appropriate, they may also arrange for a children's doctor to give further support.



SCHOOL:

If a child can manage their morning routine and can concentrate for about an hour without feeling worse, they may be ready to return gradually.

Talk to the school – they can make reasonable changes to make it easier for your child to join in. For example, some online learning, a reduced timetable, frequent rest breaks, a quiet place to rest, or exam/coursework adjustments.

The school might have a SENDCo (Special Needs Co-ordinator) or School Nurse who can be a point of contact and advice during this time.



ONLINE SUPPORT:

The website www.longcovidkids.org has advice about coping with long COVID. There is information for parents and carers, and resources like template letters for communicating with school staff. There is a children and young people's area and an online peer support platform called ChatBox.

Looking after everyone's mental health

Living through long COVID is not an easy journey. Any family members might feel exhausted, isolated, frustrated or overwhelmed. GPs, Health Visitors (if a child or sibling is under 5) or local mental health services are there to help.

The NHS website (www.nhs.uk/mental-health) is a trustworthy place to find advice, and information about the services available.