



# Long COVID in children and adolescents

Helpful information for affected families



Federal Ministry  
of Health

BMG  
Initiative **LONG**  
**COVID**

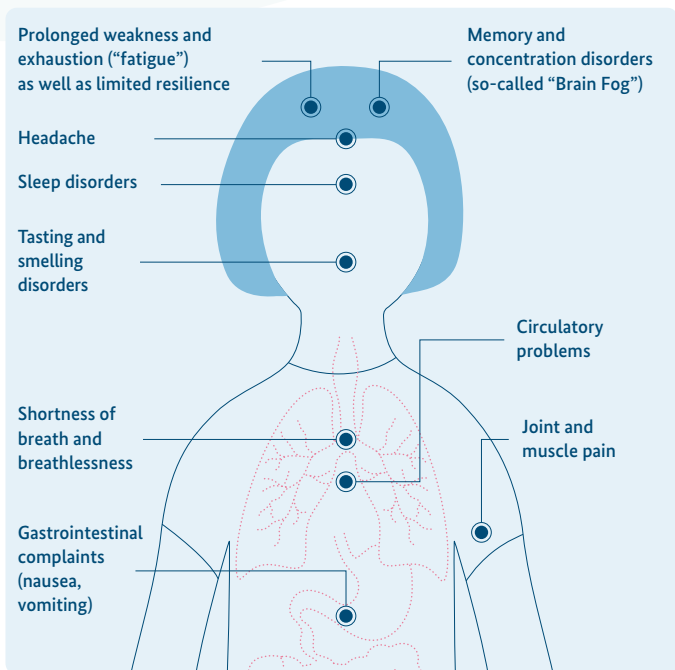
## What is Long COVID?

The Corona virus SARS-CoV-2 infection can also lead to **long-term health consequences** apart from COVID-19. These are called as Long COVID. Long COVID mostly affects adults. But children and adolescents can also fall ill. According to the WHO definition, children and adolescents have Long COVID when:

- there was a definite or suspected infection of Corona virus and
- then symptoms arise within 3 months and last for at least 2 months.

The disease frequently occurs in girls and young women, adolescents in this age group, if there are certain pre-existing conditions and repeated infections of the Corona virus. The probability of Long COVID is also high if COVID-19 had a severe progression. But it is also possible to suffer from Long COVID after a mild or asymptomatic course of the disease.

### Frequent symptoms in children and adolescents



## Which symptoms can occur?

Long COVID can lead to varied symptoms in children and adolescents, with multiple symptoms occurring simultaneously. They can impair the daily life to varying degrees.

A **persistent weakness and exhaustion (fatigue)** are among the most frequent symptoms in Long COVID. It can happen that a person feels exhausted especially quickly or needs extraordinary amount of rest. But possibly, breaks or sleeping rarely improve the symptoms or only for a short-term.

Fatigue is frequently accompanied by a so-called stress intolerance ("Post exertional malaise", abbreviated PEM). The symptoms can already aggravate after light mental or physical exertion.

## What is the course of Long COVID?

Children and adolescents have only mild symptoms in most cases, which improve on their own **within a few months**. But it is also possible that the symptoms persist for a long time. In very rare cases, children and adolescents can also develop the severest form of Long COVID: Myalgic Encephalitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS). The chronic illness also occurs after other viral infections. The long haulers are severely restricted in their lifestyle to some extent.

The cause of Long COVID is not fully clear as yet. Researchers assume that there are various reasons for why does a person fall ill. These include persistent inflammations and changes in the immune system and nervous system. The extent to which the psyche plays a role in development of Long COVID is not yet sufficiently known. But conversely, physical symptoms can greatly strain the patient emotionally.

Unfortunately, there are still a lot of prejudices towards people with Long COVID. It is therefore important that the relatives share the latest knowledge about the illness with the social environment.

## Whom can the affected families contact in case of suspicion of Long COVID?

If parents or guardians suspect that their child has Long COVID, they should first consult the paediatric or family doctor's clinic. The first clarification of the symptoms can be done there. The symptoms are enquired in a discussion. The child is physically examined and blood sample is taken if required. In this way, other causes for the symptoms must first be ruled out.

If needed, the doctor can also refer to another specialist's clinic. In the meanwhile, there are also some specialised Long COVID clinics and special consultation hours in clinics for children and adolescents.

Families can find specialised outpatient clinics, for example, via the regional clinic search on [www.bmg-longcovid.de/en](http://www.bmg-longcovid.de/en).

## How can the relatives provide support?

It is important that relatives express their understanding of the symptoms and offer comfort and support. They can support in learning coping strategies and integrating them in daily life. Children and adolescents should concentrate on activities that benefit them. Relaxation techniques such as yoga and meditation are also helpful. Children and adolescents with Long COVID frequently suffer from fatigue and stress intolerance. In these cases, 'pacing' is an important strategy to go easy on your own strengths. Pacing is learning to carefully listen to your own body and organising the strengths properly. People who are close to younger children should especially ensure that the child does not exceed its own stress limits.

Contact with children of same age plays an important role at this age. As far as possible, parents and other guardians should prevent the affected children and adolescents from secluding themselves too much. They can support in organising joint activities. For example, for school problems, the support can be by them contacting the teachers.



If children and adolescents intensely suffer from mental symptoms, you should contact the attending doctor. Thus, a psychological support can be provided if necessary.



## Where can affected families find support?

If support is needed, this need can first be addressed in the paediatric or family doctor's clinic. In certain cases, for example, the health insurance companies bear the costs of these aids. In very serious cases, it might also be possible to apply for a degree of care or even a level of disability because then there will be entitlement for further benefits.

Apart from that, various **support programmes** to make daily life easier can be worth considering in Long COVID. You will get free consultation for such programmes at the Supplementary independent participation counselling ([EUTB®](#)).

Exchanging ideas with other families on daily life with Long COVID can also help. You are not alone in the challenging situation and you can benefit from the experience of others wherever possible.

**Self-help groups** can be found in many places or even online. The National Contact and Information Centre for Motivation and Support of Self-help Groups (NAKOS) and the Long COVID platform of the National Working Group for Self-help ([BAG Self-help](#)) give a list of self-help groups.

Further notes and information on Long COVID in children and adolescents can be found in the patient guidelines “Long-/Post-Covid-Syndrome”.

## Where can I find more information?

Further information can be found at [www.bmg-longcovid.de/en](http://www.bmg-longcovid.de/en). The Federal Ministry of Health (BMG) provides reliable information, scientific insights, and assistance related to Long COVID here as a part of the “BMG Initiative Long COVID”.



## Find out more:

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## Technically reviewed health information



Information from the Federal Ministry of Health  
[www.bmg-longcovid.de/en](http://www.bmg-longcovid.de/en)



Information from the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) on Long COVID



Information from the Federal Centre for Health Education [BZgA] on infection protection:  
[www.infektionsschutz.de](http://www.infektionsschutz.de)

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