



Long COVID in children and adolescents

Helpful information for educational and social staff



Federal Ministry
of Health

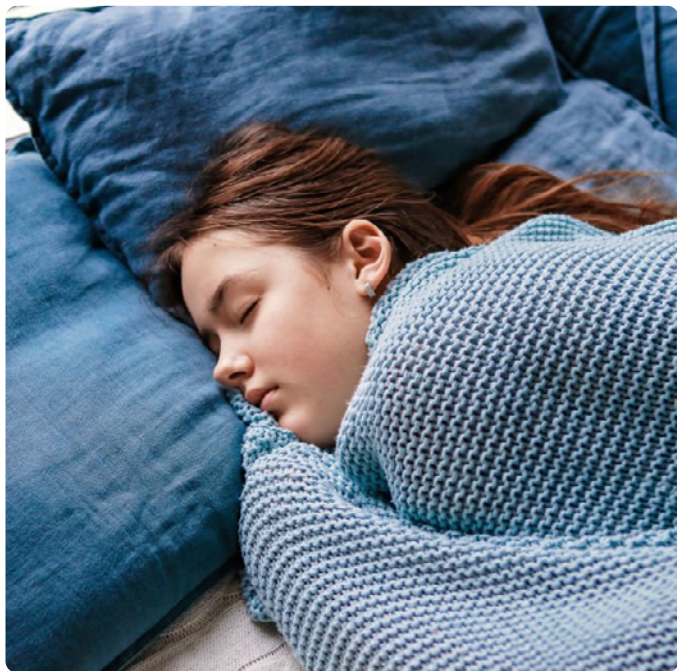
BMG
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COVID

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 causes of Long COVID are complex and not yet fully understood. Researchers assume that various disease mechanisms are involved in the development of Long COVID. 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.



How can Long COVID manifest in school children?

Long COVID can lead to varied symptoms in children and adolescents. The possible symptoms in school children include:

- Persistent exhaustion (fatigue)
- Problems with concentration and memory
- Reduced performance
- Tiredness, falling asleep during lessons
- Sensitivity to light and noise
- Problems of the circulatory system
- Headaches
- Muscle and joint aches
- Shortness of breath, breathlessness

Children and adolescents have only mild symptoms in most cases, which improve on their own within a few weeks or months. In other cases, the symptoms last longer.

It isn't always easy to perceive such anomalies in everyday school life. **However, educationists have an important role here.** If they notice such signs, they must first be discussed with the parents or other guardians. If a doctor ascertains Long COVID, various treatments and support possibilities can be considered.

What should be followed in everyday school life?

Just like other illnesses, Long COVID also can affect different spheres of life. In the context of school, on one hand, it helps the affected children and adolescents when the everyday school life is individually aligned to the respective symptoms and needs. On the other hand, the school environment should be made as normal as possible and a special status due to illness should be avoided beyond the necessary measure. Teachers can check whether adaptations as a part of various compensations for incapacity or special educational rules can be implemented in individual cases. The exact regulations can differ depending on the state. Therefore, no blanket recommendations can be made.

Capacity in Long COVID

A **persistent weakness and exhaustion** (fatigue) are among the most frequent symptoms in Long COVID. It is often accompanied by a so-called stress intolerance (“Post exertional malaise”, abbreviated PEM). The symptoms can already aggravate after light mental or physical exertion. It can even be just reading a text or a short discussion. Repeated strains can also lead to a permanent deterioration. Therefore, it is especially important for children and adolescents with stress intolerance to know their stress limits and to not exceed them. An especially sensitive handling is essential. It is important to take their symptoms and stress limits seriously.

To find individual solutions for participation at school, a **close cooperation** between the affected families, teachers, school management, the school’s psychological service, and the attending doctors is paramount. The supplementary independent participation counselling (EUTB®) can support by providing information.

Important: Employees in the youth welfare offices should also have knowledge of Long COVID. It is especially important if a school student can have only limited participation in the lessons due to the illness. In order that the participation of the affected children and adolescents is in focus, you need flexibility and an individual decision making every now and then.





How can you support affected children and adolescents emotionally and socially?

Psychological symptoms such as anxieties or depressions may occur in children and adolescents in Long COVID. Worries of missing the school year or losing contact with friends can also be seen. In addition, the situation itself can frustrate or sadden children and adolescents.

It is vital to offer the affected children and adolescents a safe space, where they can talk about their feelings. It is crucial to believe their symptoms and accept the stress limits outlined. Support from the school psychologists or counselling services can also be helpful.

Parents and other guardians can also suffer from prejudices. Therefore, and open an empathetic communication within the entire family is of help.



Actively share your knowledge with school children and among the staff. Joint case conferences can also create an understanding and acceptance for the illness.

Exhaustion or problems with concentration can make it difficult for the affected children and adolescents to participate in social activities. An informed and vigilant environment is therefore especially vital to prevent social isolation. Educational and social staff can adapt planned activities to the energy level of the adolescents to not exclude them.

What are the options for obtaining information and further training?

You can obtain information on “Long COVID and school” on the “Inclusion and school” website of the State Institute for School Quality and Educational Research Munich (ISB).

The social paediatric centre of the University Paediatric Clinic, Würzburg offers a leaflet with important information on handling stress intolerance as well as trainings, in which interested teachers can participate.

Find out more:

Further information can be found at 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”.



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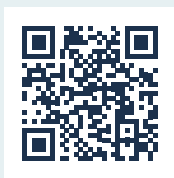
Technically reviewed health information



Information from the
Federal Ministry of Health
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

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