



Long COVID: Information and offers of support

Some people who have been infected with the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus continue to suffer from various health complaints for weeks or months. Such long-term effects are also called 'long COVID'. This information sheet informs you about **long COVID**, and about possible **offers of help and counselling**.

What is long COVID?

Long COVID is now an internationally recognised disease: The World Health Organisation has included it in the international statistical classification of diseases and related health problems, a globally used classification system for medical diagnoses.

The situation can involve long COVID if:

- an **infection with the coronavirus** has been confirmed or is very likely to have occurred,
- **complaints** persist or reappear **after four weeks**, and
- there is **no other explanation** for the complaints.

People with a mild course of the disease can also develop long COVID. The complaints can vary greatly.

Frequently-mentioned complaints are:

- Tiredness, exhaustion and limited resilience (so-called 'fatigue')
- Concentration and memory problems (so-called 'brain fog')
- Shortness of breath
- Muscle weakness and pain
- Cough
- Chest pain
- Sleep disturbances
- Fever
- Disorders of taste and smell
- Speech disorders
- Depressive moods and anxiety

Children and young people have reported complaints that are similar to those reported by adults. However, knowledge about long COVID in children and young people is still limited.

Where can one obtain medical assistance in case of long COVID?

If long COVID is suspected, the family doctor's practice is the first contact point. In case of children, it is the paediatrician's practice. It may also be that a referral is made to a specialist practice, COVID-19 speciality practice or to a long COVID consultation at the hospital. Those affected can often make an appointment directly at such speciality practices or consultations. Due to the high demand, however, there may be long waiting times. The treatment depends on the respective complaints and can therefore vary greatly. Examples of possible treatments are physiotherapy, psychotherapy, occupational therapy or the use of medication.

Some of those affected report **exercise tolerance** or '**PEM**' (post-exertion malaise). Complaints worsen even after slight physical or mental exertion, and a so-called 'crash' takes place. It is therefore important that the treatment and other measures for recovery are tailored to the respective resilience.

Rehabilitation can be particularly useful if everyday life is restricted by the illness. Information about the rehabilitation programme for long COVID is provided by doctors' practices and the various funding bodies, among others. For example, the statutory pension insurance, health insurance and statutory accident insurance are rehabilitation funding bodies.

What should I do if my ability to work is restricted by long COVID?

Long COVID can limit the ability to work. There are various ways to support those affected at the workplace. This can include an adjustment of tasks or working hours, reorganisation of the workplace or gradual reintegration. For example, the occupational medical service, the family doctor's practice or, if necessary, the rehabilitation centre can provide advice on this topic.

Pupils, trainees and students can also be affected by long COVID and be restricted in their education as a result. To date, there are no standardised regulations and offers of support for these groups. It is therefore advisable to obtain information from the relevant educational institution in addition to the contact points already mentioned.

Important to know:

Long COVID can also be the result of an accident at work or an occupational disease under certain conditions. The accident insurance funds and occupational insurance associations can help with any questions.

Where can one find help with regard to the daily routine?

Long COVID can impair the daily routine. So-called **services for participation** are supposed to support a self-determined life. You can request help with household management, coping with everyday life or leisure activities, among other things. For example, free consultation offers pertaining to such services are made available by Ergänzende unabhängige Teilhabeberatung (supplementary independent participation counselling) (EUTB®). In **self-help groups**, you can compare notes with other affected persons and relatives.

Further information is also available in the patient guideline 'Long/Post COVID syndrome' for patients, relatives and related parties and carers.



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Further information

The platform for information and contact points for long COVID



www.bmg-longcovid.de

Detailed information about COVID-19 and other infectious diseases



www.infektionsschutz.de

Information about long COVID from the Robert Koch Institute (RKI)



www.rki.de