

COVID-19 vs. Long COVID: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a common viral illness that spreads easily from person to person. Most people who contract the virus experience mild to moderate respiratory symptoms and recover without needing medical care.



COMMON SYMPTOMS INCLUDE:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Tiredness
- Shortness of breath
- Loss of taste or smell
- Headache, muscle aches, or stomach issues

Some people may experience more severe infection that requires professional medical care. People at higher risk for serious complications include older adults and people with heart disease, diabetes, lung disorders, or cancer. Sometimes, COVID-19 can lead to severe illness or death regardless of age or health status.

What is Long COVID?

Long COVID occurs when someone experiences symptoms that last for months after the initial COVID-19 infection. Long COVID symptoms can even appear in people who had mild symptoms or no symptoms. Symptoms may not begin right away. Some people develop Long COVID symptoms weeks or months after originally catching COVID-19.

COMMON SYMPTOMS INCLUDE:

- Extreme tiredness
- Trouble thinking clearly ("brain fog")
- Memory issues
- Loss of taste or smell
- Trouble sleeping
- Fast heartbeat or dizziness when standing
- Muscle pain or tremors
- Upset stomach

Risk factors for Long COVID include female sex, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, severe initial COVID-19 infection, older age, and not having received a COVID-19 vaccination.



COMMON MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT COVID-19

- ✗ **Myth:** COVID-19 is over.
- ✓ **Fact:** COVID-19 is still around and can cause serious illness.
- ✗ **Myth:** You don't need treatment if symptoms are mild.
- ✓ **Fact:** Early treatment can prevent serious illness, especially for people at high risk.
- ✗ **Myth:** Getting infected naturally is better than getting vaccinated.
- ✓ **Fact:** While infection can lead to immunity, it also comes with serious health risks. Vaccination provides strong protection without the dangers of severe illness or long-term complications.

What medications are available?

Medications play a key role in the treatment of COVID-19, especially for people at high risk. Medications available include:



- Paxlovid (nirmatrelvir/ritonavir) – An oral medication that can be taken at home.
- Lagevrio (molnupiravir) – Another oral medication recommended for those who cannot take the other available options.
- Veklury (remdesivir) – Administered in the hospital.

TIMING MATTERS! Contact your pharmacist or provider for testing and treatment as soon as you begin having symptoms. The medications work best when they are started early.

While there is no definitive cure for Long COVID, treatment generally focuses on managing symptoms to improve quality of life. Treatment recommendations vary based on the symptoms you experience. Your pharmacist and physician can create a care plan personalized to treat the symptoms you are experiencing. Early recognition and proactive management are important for supporting long-term recovery and well-being.

Talk to your health care provider

Talk to your health care provider to help protect your health by staying up to date on your COVID-19 vaccines, recognizing common symptoms, and prompt testing if symptoms arise. Open communication with your pharmacist or provider ensures you get the support and guidance you need.

- Starting COVID-19 treatment early can help people get better faster and avoid serious health problems. Many pharmacies now offer same day testing and treatment services where you can receive quick, convenient care and start feeling better faster.
- Getting your COVID-19 vaccines not only helps keep you from catching COVID, but it also lowers your chances of developing long-lasting symptoms if you catch the virus. Vaccines help your body fight off COVID-19 better, which can help you recover faster and avoid more problems down the road.
- If you or a loved one notice any new symptoms after recovering from COVID-19, reach out to your pharmacist for advice on managing issues and symptoms.



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