

## Diseases, Disorders and Injuries

# Post-COVID-19 Condition (long COVID) and the Workplace

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## What is the post-COVID-19 condition or “long COVID”?

After experiencing the initial illness related to [COVID-19](#), some people experience continued, recurring, or new symptoms. When not resolved within three months, these longer-term, wide-ranging symptoms are known as the “post-COVID-19 condition” or “long COVID.” The post-COVID-19 condition can affect work and daily life.

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## What are the symptoms of post-COVID-19 condition?

Post-COVID-19 condition affects everyone differently, and there have been reports of over 100 symptoms. The most common symptoms in adults are:

- Fatigue
- Trouble sleeping
- Shortness of breath
- General pain and discomfort
- Cognitive problems, such as memory loss or difficulty thinking or concentrating

- Mental health symptoms, such as anxiety or depression

Symptoms can range in severity and can sometimes disappear and reappear without having another diagnosis to explain them. Some people report that physical and mental over-exertion can make the symptoms worse.

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## How is the post-COVID-19 condition diagnosed?

The Public Health Agency of Canada states that there are currently no diagnostic tests or specific treatments for post-COVID-19 symptoms. If you think you have the condition, talk to your health care provider about managing your symptoms.

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## How common is post-COVID-19 condition?

The Public Health Agency of Canada estimates that about 15% of people who experienced COVID-19 had longer-term symptoms after 3 months. Of those with longer symptoms, almost half had symptoms for a year or longer. Over 20% reported that the symptoms interfered with their daily lives, and 74% missed work or school due to their symptoms.

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## Is post-COVID-19 an occupational concern?

Ongoing symptoms can affect a person's ability to perform work, such as conduct tasks that require physical exertion, or limit their ability to complete the work in an acceptable timeframe. Cognitive problems, such as memory loss or difficulty thinking or concentrating, may make competing work tasks difficult.

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## What can workplaces do to support a person with post-COVID-19 conditions?

Employers should be aware that the post-COVID-19 condition presents differently in every person, and symptoms will vary from day to day. Workers may have issues with mobility, energy levels, concentration, and memory.

Review absence management policies and adjust to support workers with long-term and variable health conditions. [Return-to-work accommodation agreements](#) may be helpful even when a formal diagnosis is not currently available or possible.

Workplaces can help by considering:

- Flexible or tailored work schedules that allow for such opportunities for rest during the workday or organizing work around times when workers have higher energy levels.

- Job redesign or task modification.
- Allowing the individual to manage their energy and cognitive levels, such as allowing more frequent breaks or extended time to complete tasks.
- Work from home or hybrid working arrangements.
- Providing reminders, written instructions, or meeting transcripts.
- Removing distractions from the workspace (such as excess noise) or adjusting lighting if sensitive to light.
- Methods to assist with physical challenges, such as mobility (e.g., using a scooter) or providing seats for tasks that would typically be done standing.
- Extended leave arrangements.
- Including the worker in activities even if they are not physically present.
- Training and education for all workers will help increase their awareness and understanding of the post-COVID-19 condition and its impact.
- Redistributing tasks when needed.
- Consent from the individual about what information is shared with their co-workers.
- Improving indoor air quality in the workplace.

If working with a person who is experiencing post-COVID-19 condition:

- Be supportive when issues occur. Understand that symptoms may come, go, and return over time.
- Help with tasks when needed.
- Help talk through work steps or processes when they are experiencing cognitive issues.
- Be patient if the person is having difficulties communicating or learning.
- Offer space and privacy if that is what they need.

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## How can I help manage work demands when I have post-COVID-19 condition?

Be open to discussing your current abilities and what functions you can achieve at work.

- Request a redistribution of work tasks.
- Pace efforts to conserve energy, as this may help reduce the likelihood of relapse.
- Take breaks to manage your energy and cognitive levels.
- Ask for help with tasks.

- Ask for space and privacy when needed.
  - Be kind to yourself and take care of your physical and mental health.
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