

# Long COVID & Physiotherapy

## THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

### What is the prevalence of Long COVID worldwide?<sup>1</sup>

World Health Organization estimates that approximately

**10-20%**

of people who develop COVID-19 will experience various mid and long-term effects as they recover

### Long COVID symptoms<sup>3</sup>

Some common Long COVID symptoms include:

- extreme exhaustion or fatigue
- memory problem or difficulty concentrating
- shortness of breath
- pain in muscles, joints or the chest
- changes to smell and taste
- delayed worsening of symptoms after exertion or exercise
- sleep disturbance
- headaches, symptoms like dizziness after sitting up or standing, skin rashes, and others

AT LEAST

**10-30%**

OF CLIENTS WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE SYMPTOMS

**12**  
WEEKS

AFTER THEIR ACUTE INFECTION<sup>2</sup>

### What does Long COVID affect?<sup>4</sup>

Long COVID can affect:

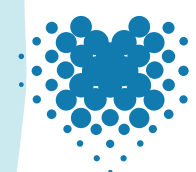
- multiple body systems
- respiratory
- cardiac
- renal
- endocrine
- neurological systems

1. World Health Organization. (2021, December). Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Post COVID-19 Condition.

Retrieved online: [https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/coronavirus-disease-\(covid-19\)-post-covid-19-condition](https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/coronavirus-disease-(covid-19)-post-covid-19-condition).

2. [https://physiotherapy.ca/sites/default/files/site\\_images/Advocacy/long\\_covid\\_en-final-rev2.pdf](https://physiotherapy.ca/sites/default/files/site_images/Advocacy/long_covid_en-final-rev2.pdf)

3-5. <https://longcovid.physio/long-covid-video-series/common-symptoms>



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## What should physiotherapists screen for with Long COVID?<sup>5</sup>

Physiotherapists should screen for:

- 1 Post exertional symptom exacerbation
- 2 Cardiac impairment
- 3 Oxygen desaturation
- 4 Dysautonomia
- 5 Functional cognition & cognitive communication
- 6 Voice & swallowing
- 7 Hearing & Tinnitus
- 8 Psychological, social & spiritual considerations

## How can physiotherapy help with Long COVID?<sup>6</sup>

Physiotherapists can support with Long COVID specific with:

- 1 Acute rehabilitation phase
- 2 Post-acute COVID-19 rehabilitation phase
- 3 Support for people with disabilities and or those who need immediate and episodic rehabilitation
- 4 Short term rehabilitation where routine care is suspended

Physiotherapists are vital to the rehabilitation efforts in intensive care units (ICUs), hospital wards, stepdown facilities and in the community (Pan American Health Organization, 2020, Thomas et al., 2020). (p. 5)

Physiotherapy expertise is a critical partner in Long COVID support and recovery. Research has shown that their clinical expertise is vital in rehab, intensive care units, hospital wards, step-down facilities, and community care. Their care can help facilitate safe, timely hospital discharge, which may alleviate current health care system pressures.

## Why are physiotherapists important to those experiencing Long COVID?<sup>7</sup>

Physiotherapists can help to:

- support
- empower
- Assist with self-management of rehabilitation (p.5)



## How can physiotherapists help with health system planning to mitigate Long COVID?<sup>8</sup>

Physiotherapists can help support to strengthen the health system with pandemic recovery efforts and Long COVID care by:

**Supporting rehabilitation** efforts in acute phase of COVID-19 (p.1)

**Being involved** in the planning of service delivery at a strategic and operational level (p.1)

