

Self-help series fact sheet 14

Diagnosing long COVID

Long COVID refers to long-term symptoms that some people experience after they have had COVID-19. Long COVID is a chronic condition that can affect many body systems. People with long COVID will have unique experiences, including how long symptoms will last. They will also have differing disease management and support needs. Evidence about long COVID is evolving.

There isn't one single treatment or medication to treat long COVID. Your doctor will talk to you about the care and support you might need.

Unfortunately, there is also no single test to diagnose long COVID. Doctors can diagnose it based on a patient's history of COVID-19 and by ruling out other possible causes of their symptoms.

The doctor will discuss the history of your symptoms and severity. They will also consider the impact of previous medication conditions.

After this initial discussion your doctor will conduct a physical exam which will include blood pressure, heart rate, temperature, pulse and breathing. They may also consider physical testing such as walking and sit-to-stand tests.

In some circumstances your doctor may also consider doing psychological testing to evaluate memory, language ability, reasoning and other cognitive skills.

Depending on your symptoms, the doctor may order specific diagnostic tests. For example, if you are experiencing respiratory symptoms a chest x-ray and pulmonary function tests may be required. The doctor may also order bloodwork to see if there are any other viral markers or an electrocardiogram (also known as an ECG or EKG), which is a test to measure your heart activity.



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If long COVID symptoms are having a big impact on your life, you may be referred to a specialist or rehabilitation service that can help manage your symptoms and help you recover.

During this series of fact sheets there will be a number of these tips and tricks but if you would like further information on a particular subject please feel free to contact us by emailing info@arthritisact.org.au and we will send you further information and a list of support activities.

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