

Self-help series fact sheet 12

Managing emotions

Feelings such as worry, frustration, sadness, guilt and loss are common and understandable responses to your conditions. They are reactions to the changes, limitations and uncertainty brought by illness. Managing our feelings is important not only because these emotions are common in long COVID, but also like stress long COVID tends to make emotional reactions stronger than they were before and harder to control.

Feelings generated by being ill can create a vicious cycle. For example, being in constant pain can trigger worries about the future. Worry leads to muscle tension, which, in turn, increases pain, which feeds back into worry and the cycle starts again. You can interrupt this cycle in several ways, such as by using relaxation to reduce muscle tension, by changing your “self-talk” and by using other strategies to reduce worry. Also, long COVID is a condition that greatly affects your functional status and wellbeing – your ability to live a rich and satisfying life.

So, what can you do?

Feelings or emotions, like other aspects of long-term illness, can be managed. There is a range of ways to deal with the stress of chronic illness. These include:

- Finding information – this can help if you feel helpless or out of control.
- Emotional support from others – particularly family and friends, which can be a source of great help.
- Joining a support group.



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- Setting concrete, short-term goals – to restore certainty, power and control.

Going forward

1. Sit down with your family and friends and discuss with them ideas on how they can help you.
2. Look at different options to help you manage your limited energy. This may be reducing work hours or getting outside help.
3. If necessary talk to Centrelink about possible payments options.
Information on Services Australia's website states that if your chronic illness is a direct result of the COVID vaccine you may be entitled to claim money from the Australian Government under pain and suffering. This is where you can provide sufficient evidence, such as a statement outlining your pre-vaccination circumstances and your ability to lead a normal life since receiving the vaccine. Disability payment is generally only after two years and you cannot work more than 15 hours a week.
4. Start recording your activities and symptom levels to determine your peaks and troughs.

If you need further information or support please have a look at our website at www.EmergeACT.org.au or the long COVID playlist on our YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/@arthritisact3717