



Ministry of Health

# LONG COVID

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## What is Long COVID?

Long COVID is a condition characterized by the continuation or development of new symptoms in individuals who had previously been infected with Serious Acute Respiratory Coronavirus -2 (SARS-CoV-2), the virus that causes Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19 disease). . It can also be defined as new, returning, or ongoing symptoms and health problems in the weeks or months after a SARS-CoV-2 infection. It typically manifests around 3 months from the onset of infection and is characterized by symptoms that persist for at least 2 months, with no other explanation for these symptoms.

## What causes Long COVID?

A previous SARS-CoV-2 infection puts you at high risk of developing Long COVID. The exact mechanism of Long COVID is still not fully understood, but it is believed to be related to the body's immune response to the initial infection with SARS-CoV-2.

## What are the symptoms of Long COVID?

The symptoms of Long COVID can be diverse and affect various body systems.

These symptoms include:

### Most common symptoms:

- Tiredness or fatigue that interferes with daily life
- Symptoms that get worse after a physical or mental effort
- Fever
- Headache
- Brain fog

### Other symptoms may include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Cough
- Chest pain
- Fast-beating or pounding heart/palpitations
- Difficulty thinking or concentrating (sometimes referred to as “brain fog”)
- Headache
- Sleep problems
- Dizziness when you stand up (lightheadedness)
- Pins-and-needles feelings
- Change in smell or taste

- Depression or anxiety
- Diarrhea
- Stomach pain
- Joint or muscle pain
- Rash
- Changes in menstrual cycles

### **How many people develop Long COVID?**

Approximately 1 in every 5 individuals who contract SARS-CoV-2 infection develop Long COVID.

### **Who is at risk of developing Long COVID?**

Long COVID can affect anyone irrespective of age or severity of the initial SARS-CoV-2 infection. It is more common in individuals who had severe COVID-19 illness, who are overweight/high body mass index (BMI), who have pre-existing medical conditions, who are immunosuppressed, and individuals who did not receive COVID-19 vaccine. Adults, particularly those over 60 years of age are at higher risk of developing Long COVID.

### **When should you seek medical care for Long COVID?**

You should seek medical care if you continue to present with symptoms that affect your daily life three months after SARS-CoV-2 infection. Healthcare providers may conduct medical examinations, including blood tests, cardiovascular system, respiratory system, and other tests.

### **Why should you seek medical care?**

You should seek medical care for early diagnosis and treatment. This improves treatment outcomes and alleviates suffering. Patients can be referred for specialized care if necessary.

### **How can I prevent Long COVID?**

You can prevent Long COVID by protecting yourself from SARS-CoV-2 infection. This includes getting COVID-19 vaccination as recommended by the Ministry of Health, wearing face masks, practicing regular hand hygiene, coughing under a flexed elbow or covering mouth with a handkerchief, ensuring proper ventilation in indoor spaces and practicing positive health-seeking behavior.

## For more information:

Dial \*719# or chat with us via WhatsApp at 0700719719.

You can also visit the Ministry of Health Website:  
<https://health.go.ke>



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