

Managing Long Covid: A Practical Support Guide for Patients

Planning a GP Visit

Introduction

We understand that living with Long Covid can be challenging and can leave you feeling nervous and uncertain. This leaflet is designed to help you understand more about Long Covid, prepare for a GP visit to discuss your symptoms and possible referral to a Long Covid Clinic where you will be able to find the support and [resources](#) you need to help with your recovery.

What is Long Covid?

Long Covid refers to symptoms that persist for 12 weeks or more after the acute phase of Covid-19 and can last for months and even years beyond the typical recovery period.

How do I know whether I have Long Covid or not?

The [NICE/SIGN Long Covid booklet](#) is a good place to start. If you still have symptoms after a Covid-19 infection that you didn't have beforehand (or you experience a significant worsening of symptoms from other chronic conditions since you caught Covid-19) and these last for at least 4 weeks then you may have Long Covid. Sometimes doctors will wait until you have had symptoms for 12 weeks before diagnosing you, depending on symptom severity.

What to do next:

- Write down a list of the symptoms you are experiencing. These symptoms may come and go and change over time - this is very common. Include symptoms you have had in the past because they may come back.
- Write down how they impact your life.
- If your symptoms are troubling you and not resolving, make an appointment to see your GP. If you have a lot of symptoms and can get a double appointment do so.

Preparing for your GP visit:

- **Date:** Have the date when you first became unwell with Covid-19 to hand
- **Make a list:**
 - Your symptoms and their impact
 - Your most worrisome issue: the GP may ask what affects you most.
 - What makes your symptoms worse?
 - How do your symptoms affect your activities, including any challenges you may now face that impact your daily living, including working, caring and attending places of education?
 - How often do your symptoms occur?
 - Examples of what your good days and bad days look like

- The medications and supplements that you are already taking. It will be helpful for the GP to know this before they prescribe anything else.
- Any questions you may have for your GP about your symptoms or treatments.
- Take a copy of our [GP Leaflet](#) if you can

During Your GP Visit:

- **Bring a friend or family member:** If you're comfortable doing so, having someone you trust can provide support, help take notes and advocate on your behalf.
- **Speak openly:** Remember to refer to your list of symptoms and concerns, and how they are affecting your life.
- **Ask questions:** Ask your prepared questions, but don't hesitate to ask your GP any further questions or seek clarification on anything you don't understand.
- **Ask for a symptom management plan:** Your GP should help outline a plan tailored to your needs, which can include medication, tests, referrals (including to a Long Covid clinic if available), mental health support, and lifestyle adjustments.
- **Appointment:** Unless you have been referred onwards, try to make sure you leave with a follow-up appointment with your GP.
- **While we hope that most GPs are empathetic** and knowledgeable about what can be offered this may not always be the case. Try and see an alternative GP in your practice if you have problems or bring this up with the practice manager if you are unhappy.

After Your GP Visit:

- **Follow the management plan:** Stick to the plan as closely as possible if you have one.
- **Consider joining a support group:** Connect with others who are going through the same experience either online or face-to-face – have a look at our [Resources](#) page. Your GP may be able to refer you to local groups
- **Look after your mental health:** It's okay to seek help. Consider therapies, meditation, and mindfulness practices. While this is not a cure for physical symptoms, it may help you cope with them better
- **Recovery and improvement can be non-linear and takes time, but remember, many others are going through a similar experience and we hope that research and advances in healthcare are on the horizon**

Additional Resources:

The Long Covid SOS website has extensive **resources** on medical care and rehabilitation, practical support, work, benefits, support groups and information for carers. See:

www.longcovidsos.org/resources

Remember, this leaflet serves as a general guide. Your GP should be your primary source of information and guidance for managing your Long Covid.