



Indigenous Wellness A Conversation on Long Covid

Defining Long COVID (also known as Post-COVID or Post-Acute Sequelae of COVID-19 (PASC))

Post-COVID Condition (PCC) is a medical syndrome in which there is a "lack of return to a usual state of health following acute COVID-19 illness." (CDC - Centers for Disease Control)¹

- In addition to any symptom/diagnosis codes, please use ICD-10: "Post COVID Condition" U09.9 (as of October 2021)¹

Criteria:

- Prior COVID-19 illness (confirmed or presumed)
- Lingering symptoms or health effects (usually considered 1-3 months)

Evaluation & Management of Common Symptoms

Fatigue: look for mimickers/ exclude treatable causes such as Anemia, B12 deficiency, iron deficiency, Vit D deficiency, thyroid disorders, myositis, adrenal insufficiency.²

Fatigue Treatment:

- Treating overexertion
- Education about pacing
- Referral for a movement program, with experienced therapists (PT, OT)
 - Work accommodations:
 - Treating depression
 - Treating sleep disorders
 - Might benefit activating antidepressants, stimulants (esp. with cognitive dysfunction)

Dysautonomia (POTS): look for Orthostatic vital signs, symptom diary, smart watches, Cardiac evaluation.^{2,3}

Dysautonomia Treatment:

- Hydration
- Compression stockings
- Avoid exacerbating factors
- Recumbent exercise

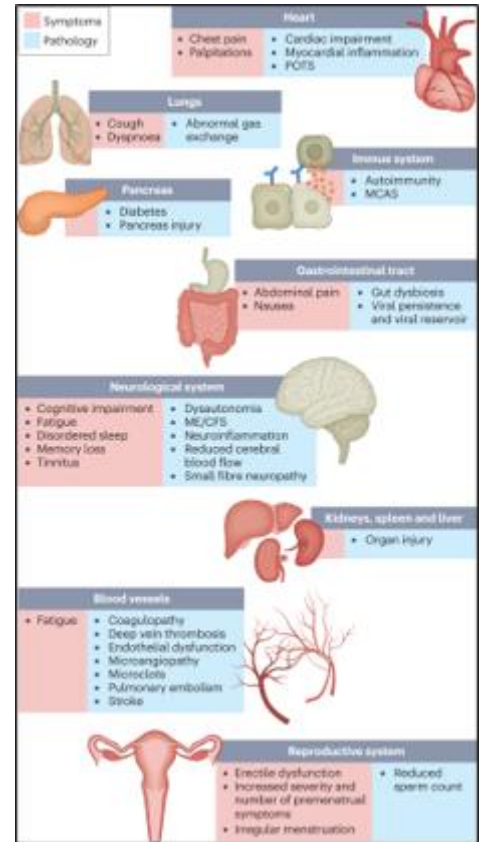
Dysautonomia Pharmacologic Treatment:

- Beta blockers
- Fludrocortisone
- Ivabradine-cardio specific
- Pyridostigmine
- Clonidine

Respiratory: Dyspnea and cough are common. Consider diagnosis of Pulmonary Embolism after Covid-19.²

Pulmonary Symptom Treatment:

- Cough
 - Usual treatment for post viral cough
 - Low threshold for a steroid inhaler
 - Often Improves
- Dyspnea
 - Breathing exercises
 - PT/Respiratory Rehab
 - Pulmonology referral as indicated





Pain: Myalgias/Arthralgias pain is common and wide ranging. Cognitive dysfunction, headaches, dizziness, and tremors are also common.^{2,4}

Pain Pharmacologic Neuropathic Treatment:

- Gabapentin
- Pregabalin
- TCA (amitriptyline)
- SNRI (venlafaxine, mirtazapine)

Pain Pharmacologic Myalgia/ Arthralgias Treatment: Consider rheumatology consultation.

- Curcumin (turmeric)
- Supplementation for anti-inflammatory benefits
- NSAIDs
- Steroid burst
- Topical meds (diclofenac)

Neurologic and Cognitive Treatment:²

- Similar to approach to fatigue – minimize triggers, allow for rest breaks, reduced work intensity.
- Speech therapy for cognitive rehabilitation
- Neuropsychology testing may be helpful
- Stimulants (methylphenidate, dextroamphetamine, modafinil) have been helpful. Additionally, guanfacine has shown early promising results.

Magnifying Health Disparities⁵

Vulnerable populations are more likely to...	Vulnerable populations are less likely to...
Hold frontline (essential) jobs, increasing exposure to virus	Be vaccinated
Live in multigenerational homes or crowded locations	Access testing during acute illness, which is often required Long COVID specialty clinics
Have pre-existing conditions known to increase illness severity	Receive acute COVID treatments
Require hospitalization	Access specialist healthcare including Long COVID clinics

Educational Guidance & Resources

- CDC. (2020b, February 11). Healthcare Workers. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/clinical-care/post-covid-conditions.html>
- American Association of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation PASC Guidance. (n.d.). Aapmr.org. <https://www.aapmr.org/members-publications/covid-19/pasc-guidance>
- UpToDate <https://www.uptodate.com/contents/covid-19-evaluation-and-management-of-adults-with-persistent-symptoms-following-acute-illness-long-covid>
- UNC Educational Handouts <https://www.med.unc.edu/phyrehab/patient-services/services-and-specialties/covid-recovery-clinic/>





References

¹Davis, H. E., McCorkell, L., Vogel, J. M., & Topol, E. J. (2023). Long COVID: major findings, mechanisms and recommendations. *Nature reviews. Microbiology*, 21(3), 133–146. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41579-022-00846-2>

²CDC. (2020, February 11). *Healthcare Workers*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/clinical-care/post-covid-conditions.html>

³Dysautonomia | National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. (n.d.). www.ninds.nih.gov. <https://www.ninds.nih.gov/health-information/disorders/dysautonomia>

⁴Castelli, G., Desai, K., & Cantone, R. (2020). Peripheral Neuropathy: Evaluation and Differential Diagnosis. *American Family Physician*, 102(12):, 732–739. <https://www.aafp.org/pubs/afp/issues/2020/1215/p732.html>

⁵CDC. (2022, December 18). *CDC COVID-19 Response Health Equity Strategy: Accelerating Progress Towards Reducing COVID-19 Disparities and Achieving Health Equity*. Retrieved May 17, 2023, from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/cdc-strategy.html>

