

'Long COVID': More than a quarter of COVID-19 patients still symptomatic after 6 months

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In a new study of adults from the general population who were infected with COVID-19 in 2020, more than a quarter report not having fully

recovered after six to eight months. Those findings are described this week in the open-access journal *PLOS ONE* by Milo Puhan and colleagues at the University of Zurich, Switzerland.

While initial public health responses to the SARS-CoV-2 virus focused on reducing the acute burden of COVID-19, a growing body of evidence indicates that the infection can also result in longer-term physical and mental health consequences. These long-term consequences, currently referred to as "post-COVID-19 syndrome" or "Long COVID" are of increasing concern for healthcare systems.

In the new study, researchers recruited 431 participants from within the contact tracing system in Zurich, Switzerland. All participants had tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 between February and August 2020, and completed an online questionnaire about their health a median of 7.2 months after their [diagnosis](#). Symptoms had been present at diagnosis in 89% of the participants and 19% were initially hospitalized. Compared to individuals not participating in the study, participants were younger, with an average age of 47.

Overall, 26% of participants reported that they had not fully recovered at six to eight months after initial COVID-19 diagnosis. Fifty-five percent reported symptoms of fatigue, 25% had some degree of shortness of breath, and 26% had symptoms of depression. A higher percentage of females and initially hospitalized patients reported not having recovered compared to males and non-hospitalized individuals. A total of 40% of participants reported at least one general practitioner visit related to COVID-19 after their acute illness. The authors say that their findings underscore the need for the timely planning of resources and patient services for post-COVID-19 care.

The authors add, "This cohort study based on a representative, population-based sample of SARS-CoV-2 infected individuals found

that 26% did not fully recover within 6-8 months after diagnosis and 40% had at least one further healthcare contact related to COVID-19. These findings underline the need for the timely planning of healthcare resources and services tailored to the needs of individuals suffering from post-COVID-19 syndrome."

More information: Dominik Menges et al, Burden of post-COVID-19 syndrome and implications for healthcare service planning: A population-based cohort study, *PLOS ONE* (2021). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0254523](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0254523)

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