

Biden makes national push for long COVID research

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President Joe Biden on Tuesday ordered a new national push to research

the nature and impact of [long COVID](#), a constellation of sometimes debilitating symptoms that linger long after infection in nearly one-third of Americans.

The research initiative will be orchestrated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and will span several federal agencies as scientists work to build on ongoing research at the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH).

The effort will also include [federal agencies](#) offering support to patients and doctors by providing science-based [best practices](#) for treating long COVID, while protecting access to insurance coverage and workers' rights as people with the condition return to their jobs.

"Many individuals report debilitating, long-lasting effects of having been infected with COVID-19, often called 'long COVID,'" Biden said in a [statement](#) announcing the research effort. "Our world-class research and public health organizations have begun the difficult work of understanding these new conditions, their causes, and potential prevention and [treatment options](#)."

The administration's plan for direct support for patients includes extending civil rights protections to individuals who have long COVID while protecting their [insurance coverage](#). It will include an emphasis on [minority communities](#) who experienced greater impacts from the pandemic, the *Associated Press* reported.

For treatment, an HHS unit called the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality will investigate best practices and provide that information to hospitals, doctors and patients, while the Department of Veterans Affairs will be an incubator for researching long COVID strategies, the *AP* reported. That agency already has long COVID programs in 18 facilities.

The research efforts will include speeding up the registrations of 40,000 people both with and without long COVID for a study on the condition, while building on the \$1 billion RECOVER Initiative, an NIH research study.

People with long COVID experience symptoms that range from brain fog to fatigue, shortness of breath and pain. It's not clear why, but ongoing research has suggested it could be lingering infection or remnants of the virus that trigger [inflammation](#), the [immune system](#) attacking normal cells, or some impact from tiny clots caused by the virus.

Experts welcomed the news.

"This is a very important move on the part of the Biden administration to acknowledge that long COVID is real, that it is a significant threat, and that much more needs to be done," Dr. Leana Wen, a former Baltimore health commissioner, told the *AP*. "The emphasis on treatment for long COVID and recognizing this could be a source of ongoing disability are long overdue."

This comprehensive approach could address "an extremely thorny issue that has previously received a scattershot approach," Diana Berrent, founder of Survivor Corps, a support group that connects patients with government and private researchers, told the *AP*. "This is the first effort that truly comports with the needs of people who are suffering."

More information: Visit Johns Hopkins for more on [long COVID](#).

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