

# Post-COVID-19 conditions tied to higher health care utilization

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Health care utilization is increased in the six months following

COVID-19 infection, but vaccination can lower the risk for long COVID symptoms, according to a study published online Jan. 18 in *JAMA Network Open*.

Stephanie A. Richard, Ph.D., from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, Maryland, and colleagues sought to identify characteristics associated with persistent post-COVID-19 symptoms. The analysis included data from 1,832 adult U.S. military [health](#) system beneficiaries who tested positive for severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) from Feb. 28, 2020, through Dec. 31, 2021, and were followed for one year.

The researchers found that more than one-third of participants (39.7 percent) had illness that lasted 28 days or longer (28 to 89 days: 19.9 percent;  $\geq 90$  days: 19.9 percent). Symptoms lasting  $\geq 28$  days were more common among participants who were unvaccinated prior to infection, reported moderate or severe initial illnesses, had more hospitalized days, and had a Charlson Comorbidity Index score of  $\geq 5$ .

Postinfection vaccination among unvaccinated participants was associated with a lower risk for reporting symptoms at six months. At six months after [symptom](#) onset, participants had a higher risk for pulmonary, neurological, and mental health-related medical encounters than before SARS-CoV-2 infection.

"Our findings suggest that post-COVID-19 conditions present a major burden to patients and the health care systems that treat them," the authors write.

Several authors disclosed financial ties to either Janssen or AstraZeneca.

**More information:** Stephanie A. Richard et al, Persistent COVID-19 Symptoms at 6 Months After Onset and the Role of Vaccination Before

or After SARS-CoV-2 Infection, *JAMA Network Open* (2023). [DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.51360](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.51360)

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