

Expert panel develops new definition of long COVID

June 11 2024, by Dennis Thompson



A new proposed definition for long COVID could help patients get the help they need, a [new report](#) from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine says.

Long COVID is a [chronic condition](#) that occurs after COVID-19 infection and is present for at least three months, the new [definition](#) holds.

Federal officials asked the National Academies to take up the issue of defining long COVID, given that the lack of a consensus definition for it has led to difficulties in diagnosis and treatment of the disorder.

"The lack of a consistent definition for long COVID has hampered research and delayed diagnosis and care for [patients](#)," said Dr. Harvey Fineberg, president of the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation and chair of the authoring committee.

"Our committee hopes this single definition, crafted with input from across research and patient communities, will help to educate the public about this widespread and highly consequential disease state," he added in an academy news release.

The committee that prepared the new definition got input from more than 1,300 people, the experts said. The report recommends that federal agencies adopt the new definition and implement it in the United States.

"Long COVID is a devastatingly persistent result of the COVID-19 pandemic that the [medical community](#) has yet to fully address," said Dr. Victor Dzau, president of the National Academy of Medicine. "Serving this patient population through better-coordinated care, more definitive diagnoses and more efficient and streamlined research are important

next steps for addressing its impact."

The definition holds that long COVID manifests in multiple ways across any organ system of the human body.

Overall, a complete list of signs, symptoms and conditions associated with long COVID would have more than 200 entries. long COVID can start just after the initial infection or it can be delayed in onset by weeks or months, the definition says. A person could have suffered from no symptoms during their [initial infection](#) and still get long COVID.

Patients with long COVID can present with one or many symptoms, including shortness of breath, cough, persistent fatigue, post-exertional malaise, difficulty concentrating, memory changes, recurring headache, lightheadedness, rapid heart rate, sleep disturbance, problems with taste or smell, bloating, constipation and diarrhea.

Long COVID patients also might have one or more diagnosable medical conditions, researchers added. These could involve any of the major systems and organs in the body, and even mental disorders like depression and anxiety.

What's more, long COVID can exacerbate existing [health conditions](#) as well as presenting as a new condition. These symptoms and conditions can range from mild to severe, and can resolve within months or persist for years, the panel said.

Anyone can get long COVID, regardless of their age, sex or background, experts said. Unfortunately, there are no clinical tests yet available that can conclusively demonstrate the presence of long COVID, the panel said. Diagnosis must be made based on observed symptoms and conditions.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more about [Long COVID](#).

Long-Term Health Effects of COVID-19 Disability and Function Following SARS-CoV-2 Infection (2024).

[nap.nationalacademies.org/cata ... ability-and-function](https://nap.nationalacademies.org/cata/.../ability-and-function)

© 2024 [HealthDay](#). All rights reserved.

Citation: Expert panel develops new definition of long COVID (2024, June 11) retrieved 18 June 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2024-06-expert-panel-definition-covid.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.