

AN APS MEMBER SYMPOSIUM

2025 Festival of Psychology

16-18 May 2025

Psychological Impacts and Interventions for People Living with Long Covid

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VhV

OVERVIEW OF THE WORKSHOP

- Overview of Long COVID
- Psychological impacts of long COVID
- Targets for psychological intervention
- Therapeutic modalities indicated for the impacts of long COVID
- Q&A
- Summary and close



WHAT IS LONG COVID?

- Occurs in people with probable or confirmed COVID-19
- Symptoms usually begin ~3 months after infection and are persistent ~2 months
- Symptoms may persist, fluctuate, or relapse

Image retrieved from: www.yalemedicine.org/news/long-covid-symptoms



Biological factors

- Persisting organ damage
- Chronic inflammation
- Persistance of viral particles
- Autoimmune reaction
- Coagulopathy
- Autonomic dysregulation

Psychological factors

- Uncertainty in the pandemic
- Loss of control
- Fear of persisting symptoms, not being able to work or support your family
- Traumatization through the disease
- Hightened sensibility
- Preexisting psychiatric disease

Social factors

- Social distancing and isolation during the pandemic in general and the infection and quarantine lead to loneliness and reduction of stabilising social relations
- Instable economic situation
- Increased general insecurity
- Increased political and social devision

Biological symptoms

- Dyspnoe
- Tachycardia, palpitations, blood pressure dysregulation
- Inflammation
- Pain (e.g. joints, skin, muscle)
- Gastrointestinal symptoms (diarrhea, nausea)

Psychological symptoms

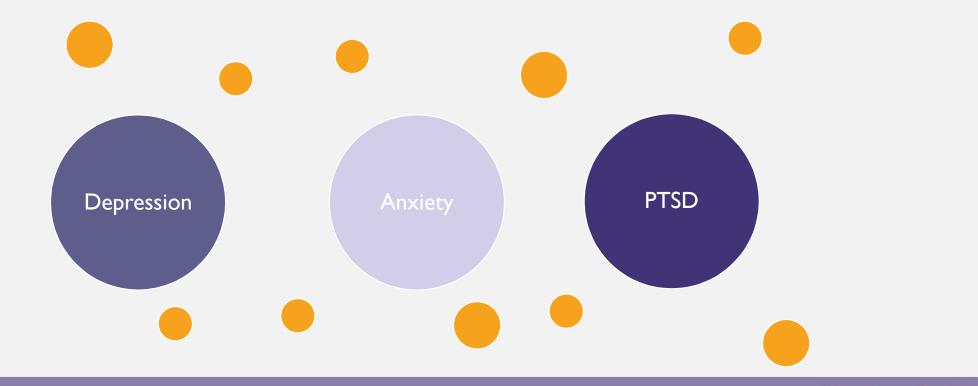
- Fatigue
- Depressiveness
- Anxiety, panic attacks
- Cognitive deficits
- Posttraumatic stress disorder
- Sleep disorders

Social symptoms

- Decrease of social inclusion due to
 - Fatigue
 - Inability to work or participate in activities
 - Depressive avolition
- Fear of re-infection
- Conflicts with friends and family due to incomprehension or depressive symptoms

Thurner, C. & Stengel, A. (2023). Long-COVID syndrome: physical-mental interplay in the spotlight. Inflammopharmacology, 31, pg 562.

PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS IN LONG COVID



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APS 2025 Festival of Psychology Gold Coast, Queensland

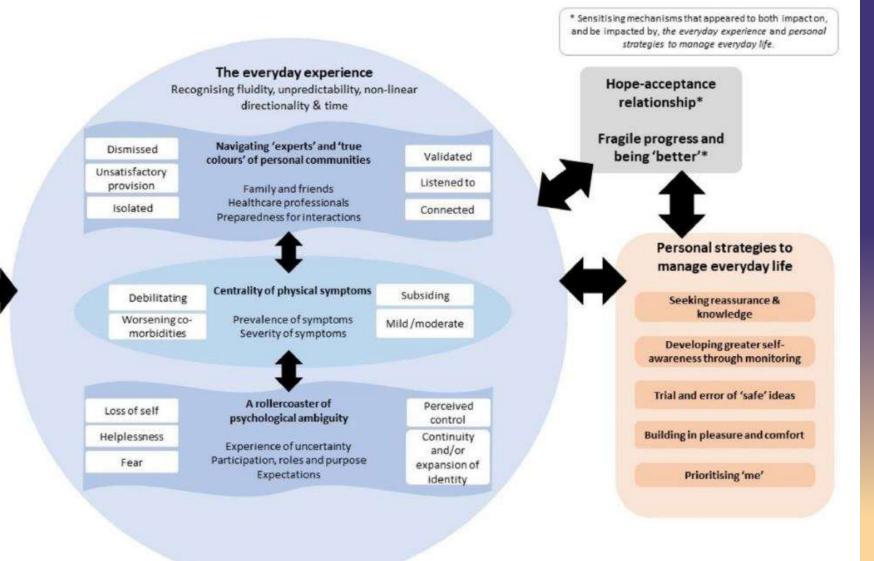
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Symptoms	Response to illness	Mood and anxiety disorders
Low mood	Absent or Intermittent	Depressed most of the day, nearly every day
Loss of enjoyment	Secondary to reduced function	Markedly diminished interest or pleasure in all/ almost all, activities most of the day, nearly every day
Worry	Uncertainty about recovery	Excessive anxiety and worry more days than not ie:"I am terrified that if I do anything, I will get worse"
	Able to turn thoughts elsewhere	Finds it difficult to control the worry ie:"I cannot stop my mind"
Fear	Related to loss of function/role, societal concerns about re-infection	Leads to significant avoidance and impacts functioning
Frustration/ irritability	Frustration in relation to function/ uncertainty	Pervasive and uncharacteristic irritability
Guilt	Secondary to reduced role function	Strong ideas of failing others
Worth	Secondary to reduced role function	Strong beliefs of uselessness or worthlessness
Hopelessness	Proportional to symptom trajectory	Hopelessness ie:"I cannot see my way out"
Suicidality	Absent	Life not worth living, thoughts of suicide.
Energy/	Fatigue that is pervasive	Feeling unmotivated,
motivation	Has motivation but not energy	lacking energy, described as lack of interest or motivation.
		Restless, trouble relaxing
Sleep	Related to physical symptoms of Long COVID.	Change from normal pattern –excessive or disrupted sleep
Cognition	Brain fog fluctuating with fatigue.	Unable to think or make decisions coloured by pessimism and thoughts of mental incapacity.
Physical	Occur in the absence of corresponding anxious	Episodic somatic symptom of anxiety (racing heart, chest
symptoms	thoughts and feelings.	discomfort, shortness of breath sweating, dizziness) associated with feelings of dread or catastrophe.

Landscape behind a Long Covid experience

- Timing of initial Covid-19 illness (e.g., 1st Wave/2nd Wave/ Delta/ Omicron)
- Timing of long covid diagnosis (e.g., before WHO definition)
- Nature of Covid-19 symptoms
- Experiences of trauma, loss, grief
- Pandemic behaviours (e.g., lockdown)
- Changing political narrative (e.g., 'It's all sorted')
- Ability to access resources (financial, health care, informational, other)



Leggat, F., et al. (2024). An exploration of the experiences and self-generated strategies used when navigating everyday life with Long Covid. BMC Public Health, 24, pg 793.