


5-2021

Navigating Post-COVID A guide for young adults recovering from mild to moderate cases of COVID-19

Chesley Ferris

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.usm.maine.edu/muskie_capstones

 Part of the [Community Health and Preventive Medicine Commons](#), [Other Public Health Commons](#), [Public Health Education and Promotion Commons](#), and the [Virus Diseases Commons](#)

This Capstone is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Scholarship at USM Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Muskie School Capstones and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of USM Digital Commons. For more information, please contact jessica.c.hovey@maine.edu.

Navigating Post-COVID

A guide for young adults recovering from mild to moderate cases of COVID-19



University of Southern Maine
April 2021
Chesley Ferris

Table of Contents

About COVID-19	3
Potential Long-Term Effects of COVID	4
What to Expect Post-COVID	4
COVID-19 Symptom Tracker	5
Post COVID-19 Symptom Tracker	6
Medication Tracker.....	7
CDC’s Guidelines for Safe Practices Post-COVID.....	8
Questions to Ask Your Doctor	10
Vaccines	11
Vaccines Q&A:	11
CDC’s Guidelines for Safe Practices Once Vaccinated	12
Mental Health.....	13
Coping with COVID-19	15
Resources	16
Notes:	17
Bibliography	20

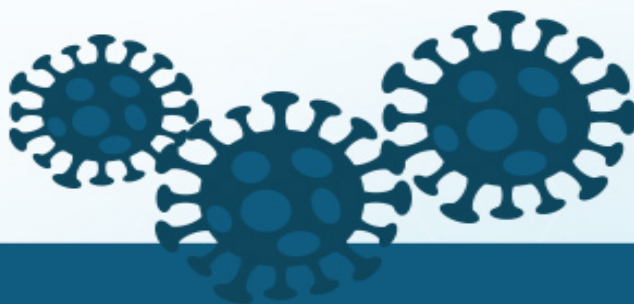
Disclaimer Statement: This guide does not substitute for medical advice.
Any questions should be directed towards one’s own medical provider.

About COVID-19

COVID-19 is a new strain of the Human Coronavirus. There are many types of Human Coronavirus, with COVID-19, or the Coronavirus Disease, being discovered in December 2019. COVID-19 is classified as a mild to severe upper respiratory illness. It can affect people differently, with some being asymptomatic, or having no symptoms, and others having mild, to moderate or severe symptoms. Symptoms can also present differently in each person. One person may not have the same symptoms as another.

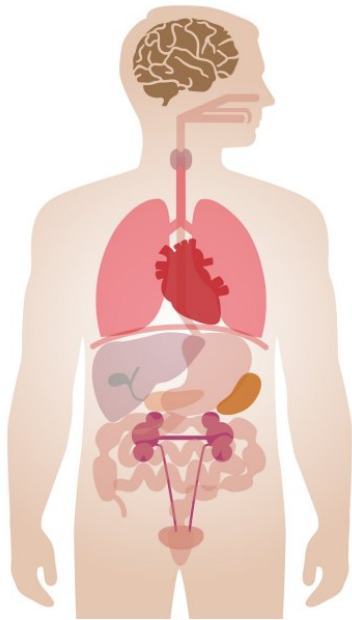
The virus is easily transmittable, meaning it can travel from person to person quickly and easily. This is why it is important to follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines on how to reduce the spread of the virus.

Researchers are finding that [1 in 5](#) healthy young adults who develop COVID have experienced lingering symptoms, or post-COVID symptom. [Another study](#) found that of those with post-COVID symptoms, or COVID long-haulers, one third originally had an asymptomatic case. This shows that those with no symptoms are still at risk of developing post-COVID symptoms. As COVID-19 is still a new type of Coronavirus, researchers are still learning more about the virus as time goes on.



Potential Long-Term Effects of COVID

COVID-19 can affect:



The Heart

The Lungs

The Circulatory System

The Brain and Central Nervous
System

Mental Health

Musculoskeletal

What to Expect Post-COVID

It is unknown why some people who have contracted the coronavirus experience lingering symptoms for weeks to months. Medical professionals have found that those with lingering symptoms may experience the following:

The most common long-term effects are:

- Fatigue
- Shortness of breath
- Cough
- Joint pain
- Chest pain

- For more information, please visit:

[COVID-19 \(coronavirus\): Long-term effects - Mayo Clinic](#) - [Long-Term Effects of COVID-19 | CDC](#)

Other potential long-term effects include:

- Difficulty thinking and concentrating
- Depression
- Muscle pain
- Headache
- Fever
- Heart palpitations
- Trouble sleeping
- Trouble with mood; anxiety
- Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (prolonged tiredness that worsens with activity and does not improve with rest)

COVID-19 Symptom Tracker

Record your symptoms to easily share with your health care provider

Symptom	Did you experience this symptom?	If you have experienced this symptom, has it resolved?
Fever or chills		
Cough		
Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing		
Fatigue		
Muscle or body aches		
Headache		
New loss or change of taste and/or smell		
Sore throat		
Congestion or runny nose		
Nausea or vomiting		
Diarrhea		
A rash on the skin or discoloration of fingers or toes		
Loss of appetite		
Trouble breathing*		
Persistent pain or pressure in the chest*		
New confusion*		
Inability to wake or stay awake*		
Bluish lips or face*		

***If you are experiencing trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, or bluish lips or face, please seek emergency medical attention.**

Post COVID-19 Symptom Tracker

Record your symptoms to easily share with your health care provider

Symptom	Did you experience this symptom?	If you have experienced this symptom, has it resolved?
Fatigue		
Cough		
Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing		
Joint pain		
Chest pain		
Difficulty thinking and concentration		
Memory problems		
Sleep problems		
Muscle Pain		
Headache		
Intermittent Fever		
Fast-beating or pounding heart		
Depression		
Inability to exercise		
Rash or hair loss		

If you are experiencing trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, or bluish lips or face, please seek emergency medical attention.

Medication Tracker

Name of Medication	Dosage	Date	Time	Side effects?

CDC's Guidelines for Safe Practices Post-COVID

I think or know I had COVID-19, and I had symptoms

You can be around others after:

- ◆ 10 days since symptoms first appeared **and**
- ◆ 24 hours with no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications **and**
- ◆ Other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving*

**Loss of taste and smell may persist for weeks or months after recovery and need not delay the end of isolation*

Most people do not require testing to decide when they can be around others; however, if your healthcare provider recommends testing, they will let you know when you can resume being around others based on your test results.

Note that these recommendations **do not** apply to persons with severe COVID-19 or with severely weakened immune systems (immunocompromised). If you have contracted a severe case of COVID-19 or have a severely weakened immune system, please visit the CDC's website for more information.

I tested positive for COVID-19 but had no symptoms

If you continue to have no symptoms, you can be with others after 10 days have passed since you had a positive viral test for COVID-19. Most people do not require testing to decide when they can be around others; however, if your healthcare provider recommends testing, they will let you know when you can resume being around others based on your test results.

If you develop symptoms after testing positive, follow the guidance above for “I think or know I had COVID-19, and I had symptoms.”

For anyone who has been around a person with COVID-19:

Anyone who has had close contact with someone with COVID-19 should stay home for 14 days **after their last exposure** to that person.

However, anyone who has had close contact with someone with COVID-19 and who meets the following criteria does **NOT** need to stay home.

- ◆ Someone who has been fully vaccinated within the last three months and shows no symptoms of COVID-19

OR

- ◆ Someone who has had COVID-19 illness within the previous 3 months **and**
- ◆ Has recovered **and**
- ◆ Remains without COVID-19 symptoms (for example, cough, shortness of breath)

Confirmed and suspected cases of reinfection of the virus that causes COVID-19

Cases of reinfection of COVID-19 have been reported but are rare. In general, reinfection means a person was infected (got sick) once, recovered, and then later became infected again. Based on what we know from similar viruses, some reinfections are expected.

For more information, please visit the CDC’s website:

[What to Do If You Are Sick | CDC](#)

Questions to Ask Your Doctor

It is important to reach out to your doctor with any questions or concerns you may have. You may have questions such as:

- What medications should I be taking to manage my symptoms?
 - How often should I take them?
 - What dosage should I take? How much can I take within 24 hours?
 - Do I need to eat before taking these medications?
- Do you have any general recommendations to help manage my symptoms?
- Is there anything I can do to help improve my sleep?
- Should I be consuming drinks high in electrolytes?
- Should I be worried about my shortness of breath?
- What should I do when I become short of breath?
- When is it safe to exercise again? Are there any exercises you recommend?
- Are there any brain activities I can do to help with my brain fog?
- What can I do to help with my anxiety?
- When am I able to end my isolation?
- Should I wait to get the vaccine if I am experiencing post-COVID symptoms? When is it safe to receive the vaccine?

If you are concerned with something you see, read, or hear about COVID-19, do not hesitate to reach out to your health care provider.

Vaccines

The CDC recommends that those who have recovered from COVID-19 get the vaccine when available. Reasons behind this recommendation:

- Experts are unsure of how long natural immunity protects oneself from reinfection
- While uncommon, there is a chance of reinfection
- Protection from other strains of the virus

If you were treated for COVID-19 with monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma, you should wait 90 days before getting a COVID-19 vaccine. Talk to your doctor if you are unsure what treatments you have received or if you have more questions about getting a COVID-19 vaccine.

CDC

Vaccines Q&A:

- Is the vaccine considered safe for those who have recovered from COVID-19?
 - Yes
- If I've already had COVID, will my side effects be worse?
 - There is currently no evidence that shows one's symptoms being better or worse after receiving the vaccine
- What are the potential side effects from the vaccine and how long do they last?
 - Potential side effects include mild arm soreness, fatigue, muscle aches, headache and/or fever - Symptoms should resolve in less than 48 hours
- What does Fully Vaccinated mean?
 - One is considered fully vaccinated two weeks after receiving their second dose in a 2-dose series, such as Pfizer or Moderna Vaccines, *or*
 - Two weeks after a single-dose vaccine, such as Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine
- How long does protection from a COVID-19 vaccine last?
 - Researchers are unsure how long the vaccine(s) protect our bodies from COVID-19

CDC's Guidelines for Safe Practices Once Vaccinated

What's Changed

If you've been fully vaccinated:

- You can gather indoors with fully vaccinated people without wearing a mask.
- You can gather indoors with unvaccinated people from one other household (for example, visiting with relatives who all live together) without masks, unless any of those people or anyone they live with has an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.
- If you've been around someone who has COVID-19, you do not need to stay away from others or get tested unless you have symptoms.
 - However, if you live in a group setting (like a correctional or detention facility or group home) and are around someone who has COVID-19, you should still stay away from others for 14 days and get tested, even if you don't have symptoms.

What Hasn't Changed

For now, if you've been fully vaccinated:

- You should still take steps to protect yourself and others in many situations, like wearing a mask, staying at least 6 feet apart from others, and avoiding crowds and poorly ventilated spaces. Take these precautions whenever you are:
 - In public
 - Gathering with unvaccinated people from more than one other household
 - Visiting with an unvaccinated person who is at increased risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19 or who lives with a person at increased risk
- You should still avoid medium or large-sized gatherings.
- You should still delay domestic and international travel. If you do travel, you'll still need to follow CDC requirements and recommendations.
- You should still watch out for symptoms of COVID-19, especially if you've been around someone who is sick. If you have symptoms of COVID-19, you should get tested and stay home and away from others.
- You will still need to follow guidance at your workplace.

Mental Health

Since the beginning of the pandemic, studies have found increased rates of anxiety, depression, substance use, stress-related symptoms, and serious thoughts of suicide among US citizens. When looking at those who have contracted COVID-19, one in five have been diagnosed with a new psychiatric disorder, such as anxiety, depression, or insomnia within three months of testing positive. It is important to recognize signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety and know when and how to seek proper treatment.

Depression

Signs and symptoms of depression include but are not limited to:

- Feeling sad or anxious most or all of the time
- Loss of interest in activities that used to bring you joy
- Irritability or restlessness
- Trouble falling or staying sleeping or sleeping too much
- Changes in appetite
- Having a hard time concentrating
- Being indecisive
- Feeling guilty, worthless or helpless
- Thinking about suicide or hurting yourself

Treatments for depression can include but are not limited to:

- Therapy or counseling
- Medications
- Lifestyle changes



Anxiety

Signs and symptoms of anxiety include but are not limited to:

- Feeling uneasy with uncontrollable worry or dread
- Stomach and digestion problems
- Difficulty concentrating and/or issues with memory
- Increased heart rate
- Fatigue
- Difficulty sleeping
- Irritability
- Restlessness
- Feeling weak or tired

Treatments for anxiety can include but are not limited to:

- Therapy or counseling
- Medications
- Lifestyle changes

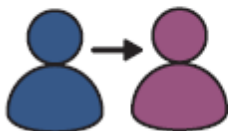
The information above is not intended to diagnose one with depression and/or anxiety and does not replace medical care. If you believe you have depression and/or anxiety or are experiencing the symptoms listed above, please talk with your medical professional. Your medical professional will be able to provide you with the correct resources and proper treatments for your needs.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT YOUR CONCERNS ARE VALID

There are many reasons that you might be concerned or worried about COVID-19. Some of the most common are:



Getting sick



Passing the virus onto others,
especially those that are high-risk



Adjusting to a new reality for
an uncertain amount of time



Taking care of and
supporting your family



Concern about the health
of your friends and family



Financial stress



Not being able connect with
friends and family the way you're
used to



Shortages of certain
common supplies

Coping with COVID-19

It is important to realize what you can control during the pandemic and with your physical and mental health.

REALIZE WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL

One of the most frustrating things about COVID-19 is that so much about the virus and the limitations on where you can go are out of your control. However, there are things that you can control, and focusing on those things can provide you with some comfort. Some of the things you can control include:

YOUR MIND AND BODY



- Keep a healthy diet
- Exercise at home
- Get enough sleep
- Do not smoke or drink alcohol excessively
- Take care of your mental health
- Maintain self-care and personal hygiene

YOUR IMMEDIATE ENVIRONMENT



- Your house, your bedroom, your closet, your kitchen – now is the time to clean and get organized
- Make responsible choices about when to leave the house and only go out if necessary
- Limit the number of people you come into contact with
- Work from home if you are able to

WHAT YOU CONSUME



- Don't overdo your news and information intake
- Get your information from reliable sources like the CDC or WHO
- Watch TV, movies, and videos that make you feel good

HOW YOU PREPARE



- Keep 2-4 weeks of food on hand
- Avoid overstocking on supplies that are in high demand so other people can have enough of the essentials too
- If you take medication, get refills and keep a month's supply at home if possible

HOW YOU PROTECT YOURSELF



- Regularly wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water or use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Avoid greeting people by shaking hands, kissing or hugging
- Keep 6 feet of distance between you and anyone who is coughing or sneezing

HOW YOU PROTECT OTHERS



- Stay home if you are sick aside from getting medical care
- Cover your coughs and sneezes
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces

Resources

HOW RIGHT NOW

Website: www.howrightnow.org

How Right Now is an organization created to support the emotional health of those who have been affected by COVID-19. The campaign's website caters to the user's specific emotional needs through asking simple questions and then providing the user with the correct resources for their situation. The website helps the reader with managing feelings around stress, grief, loss, isolation, anger, sadness, and more. How Right Now has partnered with organizations such as the CDC Foundation to provide the user with accurate and up-to-date information.

MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA

Website: www.mhanational.org/covid19

Mental Health America (MHA) is dedicated to addressing the effect COVID-19 has played on mental health. MHA has compiled a wide variety of resources including general information around how COVID could affect one's mental health, to wellness and coping skills, to existing mental health concerns, and more. The organization has also developed a variety of mental health screening tools with the pandemic specifically in mind.

They also published a variety of resources for Immediate Response, which can be found here: [Resources for Immediate Response | Mental Health America](#)

SAMHSA HELPLINE

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, or SAMHAS, provides a Disaster Distress Helpline 24/7, 365-day-a-year. The service offers crisis counseling and support to people experiencing emotional distress related to COVID-19. If you are experiencing emotional distress and are in need of assistance [Call 1-800-985-5990](tel:1-800-985-5990) or [Text "TalkWithUs" to 66746](text:TalkWithUs)

[illegible]

This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 20 evenly spaced horizontal black lines across the entire width of the page, providing a guide for writing. The background is a solid off-white color. There are no margins, text, or other markings present.

This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 20 evenly spaced horizontal black lines across the entire width of the page, providing a guide for handwriting or typing. The background is a solid off-white color.

Bibliography

- “Anxiety Disorders.” Mayo Clinic. Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, May 4, 2018. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/anxiety/symptoms-causes/syc-20350961>.
- Coelho, Steph. “COVID-19 Rehabilitation for Fatigue, Breathing, and Mental Health.” Medical News Today. MediLexicon International, November 17, 2020. <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/covid-19-rehabilitation#pulmonary>.
- “Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, February 25, 2021. <https://www.cdc.gov/dotw/covid-19/index.html>.
- “COVID-19 (Coronavirus): Long-Term Effects.” Mayo Clinic. Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, April 13, 2021. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/in-depth/coronavirus-long-term-effects/art-20490351>.
- “COVID-19 and Your Mental Health .” MHA National . Mental Health America, 2021. https://mhanational.org/sites/default/files/COVID-19%20and%20Your%20Mental%20Health%20Infographic_0.pdf.
- “COVID-19.” Mental Health America. Mental Health America Inc, 2021. <https://mhanational.org/covid19>.
- Curley, Bob. “Long-Haul COVID-19 Symptoms May Appear in This Order.” Health Line, March 17, 2021. <https://www.healthline.com/health-news/long-haul-covid-19-symptoms-may-appear-in-this-order>.
- “Disaster Distress Helpline.” SAMHSA, March 3, 2021. <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline>.
- Fawcett, Eliza. “COVID-19 Long-Haulers Struggle with Persistent Mental Health Issues: Brain Fog, Anxiety, Depression and Sleep Disorders.” *courant.com*. Hartford Courant, February 5, 2021. <https://www.courant.com/coronavirus/hc-news-coronavirus-long-haulers-mental-health-20210205-tzdydla6b5gibmkj324cubair4-story.html>.
- Goldberg, Emma. “For Long-Haulers, Covid-19 Takes a Toll on Mind as Well as Body.” *The New York Times*. The New York Times, September 7, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/07/health/coronavirus-mental-health-long-hauler.html>.
- “How Right Now.” How Right Now | Finding What Helps. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Foundation, 2021. <http://www.howrightnow.org/>.
- Huang, Yong, Melissa D. Pinto, Jessica L. Borelli, Milad Asgari Mehrabadi, Heather Abrihim, Nikil Dutt, Natalie Lambert, et al. “COVID Symptoms, Symptom Clusters, and Predictors for Becoming a Long-Hauler: Looking for Clarity in the Haze of the Pandemic.” *MedRxiv*, March 5, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1101/2021.03.03.21252086>.

- “Human Coronavirus Types.” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, February 15, 2021. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/types.html>.
- Mazziotta, Julie. “Significant Amount of 'Long-Haul' COVID Sufferers Had Mild Symptoms During Initial Infection.” PEOPLE.com, March 9, 2021. <https://people.com/health/long-haul-covid-sufferers-had-mild-symptoms-during-initial-infection/>.
- “Mental Health Conditions: Depression and Anxiety.” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, February 15, 2021. <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/campaign/tips/diseases/depression-anxiety.html>.
- “Post-COVID Conditions.” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, April 8, 2021. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/long-term-effects.html>.
- Publishing, Harvard Health. “COVID-19 Basics.” Harvard Health, April 14, 2021. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-basics>.
- Rudzhan , Nagiev. March 30, 2021. *The Mighty*. <https://themighty.com/2021/03/postpartum-depression-causes-beyond-hormones/>.
- Vinetz, Joseph. “COVID-19 Rehabilitation for Fatigue, Breathing, and Mental Health.” Medical News Today. MediLexicon International, November 17, 2020. <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/covid-19-rehabilitation#when-to-seek-help>.
- “What Is COVID-19?” coronavirus. Accessed April 22, 2021. <https://coronavirus.dc.gov/page/what-covid-19>.
- “What We Know about Long-Term Effects of COVID-19.” WHO . World Health Organization; EPI Win; Infodemic Management , September 9, 2020. https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/risk-comms-updates/update-36-long-term-symptoms.pdf?sfvrsn=5d3789a6_2.
- “When You Can Be Around Others After You Had or Likely Had COVID-19.” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, March 12, 2021. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/end-home-isolation.html>.
- “When You've Been Fully Vaccinated.” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, April 2, 2021. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html>.