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# Long COVID in Young Children, School-Aged Children, and Teens

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**Long COVID** happens when a child continues to have symptoms  $\geq 3$  months after having a COVID-19 infection. Sometimes symptoms change, or symptoms may reappear after feeling better.

Signs and symptoms of long COVID are variable in children of different ages.

<b>Infants and toddlers (0-2 y)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Trouble sleeping</li><li>Poor appetite</li><li>Stuffy nose</li><li>Dry or wet cough</li></ul>	<b>Preschool-aged children (3-5 y)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Daytime tiredness or sleepiness</li><li>Low energy</li><li>Dry cough</li></ul>
<b>School-aged children (6-11 y)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Trouble with memory or focusing</li><li>Feeling lightheaded or dizzy</li><li>Back or neck pain</li><li>Headaches</li><li>Trouble sleeping</li><li>Stomach pain</li><li>Nausea or vomiting</li><li>Fear of specific things</li><li>Refusing to go to school</li><li>Itchy skin or rash</li></ul>	<b>Adolescents (12-17 y)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Trouble with memory or focusing</li><li>Feeling lightheaded or dizzy</li><li>Back or neck pain</li><li>Headaches</li><li>Change or loss in smell or taste</li><li>Body, muscle, or joint pain</li><li>Daytime tiredness or sleepiness</li><li>Low energy</li><li>Tired after walking</li></ul>

 There is no cure for long COVID, but physicians may recommend medicine to help with some symptoms and guidance on avoiding symptom flares.

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## Long COVID happens when

months after a SARS-CoV-2 infection.

Some children have COVID-19 symptoms that do not go away, while others might feel better but later develop new symptoms. Sometimes, symptoms can come and go. Long COVID can affect any child, even if they had mild or no symptoms when they had COVID-19.

Long COVID is common, affecting up to 10% to 20% of children with a his-

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tory of COVID-19. With almost 6 million US children potentially affected, this is higher than the number of children with asthma, the most common chronic health problem in children.

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## What Symptoms Should I Look for?

Long COVID can impact many body parts, and its symptoms can last for months or years. It can severely affect daily activities and emotional well-being, such as playing or attending school.

Long COVID has many common features but can look different across ages. Infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children are more likely to have symptoms parents can observe, such as poor appetite, sleepiness, and respiratory symptoms (eg, a cough). School-aged children are more likely to

have neurologic symptoms, eg, trouble focusing, trouble sleeping, or feeling lightheaded. They may also have back or neck pain, headache, stomach pain, or vomiting. Sometimes, they have behavioral changes. Adolescents are more likely to have a change or loss in smell or taste, pain, fatigue-related symptoms, trouble with memory, and lightheadedness. Postexertional malaise (PEM) has been reported in children and adults with long COVID. PEM is a flare of symptoms and/or the appearance of new symptoms even after minimal exertion, including physical activity, mental exertion, and sensory overload. Often presenting 24 hours after the triggering event, PEM is different from just being more tired than normal after an activity or feeling muscle soreness.

## How Should Parents Track Their Child's Symptoms?

Parents can track their child's symptoms by noting when symptoms start, how long they last, and their severity. Record if symptoms are constant or come and go and what might improve or worsen them. Recording daily can help identify patterns and support discussions with your child's pediatrician.

## How Is Long COVID Diagnosed and Treated?

There are no specific blood tests for long COVID. It is diagnosed based on prolonged symptoms or new or worsening conditions. A past positive COVID-19 test is not needed for diagnosis. Parents can observe and document symptoms to

discuss with their child's pediatrician.

There is no cure for long COVID, but researchers are working hard to find treatment. Health care professionals may recommend medicine to help with some symptoms as well as guidance on how to avoid symptom flares. They can also help collaborate with schools if your child with long COVID needs to change their education plan.

## For More Information

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<https://studies.recover-covid.org/pdf/RECOVER-Pediatric-LongCOVIDTip-Sheet-ENG-v2.pdf>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNTXh8QPiEc>

<https://longcovid->

[families.org/pediatric-long-covid/](https://families.org/pediatric-long-covid/)

<https://www.unicef.org/parenting/health/long-COVID-children>

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