

THE PANDEMIC AFTER THE PANDEMIC

By Erin Hartnett DNP

On August 11, the CDC relaxed its COVID guidelines on quarantines, screening tests, and social distancing. They acknowledge that the pandemic is not over, but it no longer needs to disrupt our daily lives. The following are the CDC changes:

- If you positive for Covid, you still must isolate for 5 days, but you can end isolation at day 5 even if you are still positive, if your symptoms are improving.
- If you have been exposed to COVID, you no longer have to quarantine if you aren't showing symptoms, even if you are not vaccinated, just wear a high-quality mask for 10 days and get tested on Day 5.
- Screening tests which were used to catch asymptomatic infections in community settings are no longer recommended (schools).
- You no longer must stay 6 feet away from others to avoid infection.

But, as the world moves on to "living with COVID," there are many people who continue to "live with Covid symptoms" in their body. Approximately 30% of people who have been infected with the coronavirus may experience lingering symptoms or develop new symptoms 28 days or longer after the initial onset of disease. We have had over 75 million Covid cases in the U.S. This could be another pandemic after the pandemic!

This lingering condition is called Long COVID. Some common symptoms are fatigue, hair loss, chronic pain, brain fog, neurological, cardiac and respiratory symptoms, depression, anxiety, and altered sense of taste or smell. Yet Long Covid is incredibly misunderstood and under researched. Health care providers often dismiss or ignore patients' complaints of these symptoms. If you suspect you have symptoms of Long Covid, let your primary care provider know. The CDC's Healthcare Appointment Checklist for Post Covid Conditions:

(<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/long-term-effects/post-covid-appointment/appointment-checklist.pdf>) will help you to know what to tell your healthcare provider. If your provider can't help you, ask for a referral to another provider who might be able to help. Nobody has the answers right now, but there are some ways to help manage some of the symptoms. There are also some valuable resources:

Survivor Corps, (<https://www.survivorcorps.com>) a grassroots organization that offers education and resources for COVID patients and connects them to medical experts and research.

RECOVER (<https://recovercovid.org/about>) is an ongoing study funded by the National Institutes of Health that is enrolling people to track the effects of COVID-19

over time. The Comprehensive Access for Research and Education (CARE) for Long Covid Act (https://www.kaine.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/care_for_long_covid_act_one-pager.pdf) is stalled in Congress. Call your representative to support this.

The best way to prevent Long-Covid is to prevent getting Covid! Make sure you are vaccinated, boosted and keep up to date as new vaccines are developed. A new vaccine which has more protection against variants will be out soon.

Stay well.

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