

Long COVID / Post COVID-19 Condition

Getting back to life after COVID-19

The information to date indicates that most people will fully recover from their symptoms after testing positive for COVID-19. However, for some, symptoms of COVID-19 can linger for days to weeks after a person is considered “recovered” from COVID-19 and no longer infectious. It can be normal for symptoms to linger for 4 – 12 weeks as you or the person you are caring for slowly gets well again and resumes their previous activities. It may take time to heal so be kind to yourself and to others. You are not alone.

If symptoms continue for **more than 12 weeks** after a person first became ill with COVID-19, these self-management resources offer strategies to reduce the impact of these ongoing symptoms. Talk to your health-care provider about recovery plan is right for you.

These pages are a source of information to learn about Long COVID / post COVID-19 condition and to access self-management resources for anyone with ongoing health concerns after having COVID-19 or while caring for someone recovering from COVID-19.

What is Long COVID or Post COVID-19 Condition?

Long COVID, or post COVID-19 condition, is the presence of COVID-19 symptoms three months after becoming ill that cannot be attributed to any other medical condition. These symptoms usually impact daily activities and may change over time. **A positive polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test or rapid antigen test (RAT) is not required for a diagnosis of Long COVID or referral for interdisciplinary care.**

Click [here](#) to view a brief Long COVID overview video.

Common symptoms of Long COVID include fatigue, shortness of breath and brain fog. There are other symptoms that can impact a person’s ability to function in day to day activities. Symptoms of Long COVID can be similar to many other health conditions like lung or heart disease. Talk to your health-care provider about your symptoms.

- Brain fog, trouble with memory and concentration
- Sleep problems
- Feeling very weak and tired (fatigue)
- Shortness of breath
- Mental health conditions (depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder)
- Gut problems (diarrhea, constipation, nausea and vomiting)
- Cough that won't go away
- Loss of taste (ageusia)
- Headaches
- Feeling dizzy (vertigo)
- Ringing in your ears (tinnitus)
- Changes to your vision
- Fever
- Loss of smell (anosmia)
- Changes to your hearing
- Problems with swallowing (dysphagia)
- Heart palpitations
- Stuffy nose
- Sore throat
- Muscle and joint pain
- Skin rash

When to seek help

If you or the person you are caring for is experiencing the following, contact a health-care provider:

- Concerns about recovery
- Shortness of breath that does not get better after resting or using the suggested [self-management strategies](#)
- Shortness of breath during activities that are usually easy for you
- Brain fog, attention span, memory or energy levels are not getting better
- Symptoms that make regular daily activities very hard to do or stop you completely (e.g., caring for yourself or going back to work or school)
- Feelings of depression, anxiety or stress that aren't getting better

If you or the person you are caring for are experiencing the following symptoms, it is a **medical emergency** and you should **call 911**:

- Finding it very hard to breathe, where each breath is a struggle, or can only say one word at a time
- Experiencing very bad chest pain
- Having a hard time waking up or staying awake
- Feeling very confused
- Passing out or fainting

Material adapted from [MyHealth.Alberta.ca](https://myhealth.alberta.ca).

Please note: The information on this site is not intended as medical advice. It is intended for educational and informational purposes only. Please consult your health-care provider before making any decisions regarding your health-care.

Adult Symptoms

While adults who have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine typically experience milder illness and are less likely to require hospitalization or care in an intensive care unit, Long COVID can impact anyone who has had COVID-19. On this page you will find information about symptoms and self-management strategies for people experiencing ongoing impact of COVID-19. Talk to your family or health-care provider if you are experiencing Long COVID symptoms.

[Click here for information for Children and Teens](#)

Symptoms

Below is information to manage the most common persistent symptoms of Long COVID / post COVID-19 condition.

Brain fog

Trouble with concentration, memory and thinking after having COVID-19 is often called “brain fog” and can have a big impact on daily tasks, school, employment and relationships. Brain fog can be worse if you also have sleep problems, pain or mental health issues.

It is important to talk to your family or health-care provider if you are experiencing brain fog. Memory trouble or challenges with thinking may improve in a few weeks or they can last for months. Contact your health-care provider, a psychologist, an occupational therapist or a speech language pathologist if trouble with your concentration, memory and/or thinking are impacting your daily activities and do not appear to be improving.

How do I improve my concentration, memory and/or thinking?

There are many ways to manage problems with concentration, memory and thinking. [The strategies in this document](#) and in the [attention, concentration, and memory](#) section of our Brain Health page can provide suggestions to help you manage your day-to-day activities while symptoms persist. Other strategies to manage brain fog during Long COVID can be found [here](#) (*material provided courtesy Interdisciplinary Clinical Care Network*).

Our sections [managing your energy](#) and [returning to daily activities](#) also offer more strategies that may help.

Strengthen your body to strengthen your brain

It can be difficult to find the energy to exercise if you feel tired, weak or short of breath. Start slowly and try to add light exercise into your daily routine. See our section on [exercising and being active](#) for more information.

Give your brain a workout

Try activities you enjoy to get your brain working. Start with tasks or activities you can complete but are a bit of a challenge. As tasks or activities are no longer difficult, slowly work towards harder challenges.

Brain strengthening activities include:

- Reading
- Puzzles
- Memory games
- Word and number games
- New activities or hobbies

Set reminders

It's easy to lose track of tasks and things that need to be done. Write it down – make to-do lists, leave yourself notes. Set alarms in your phone or reminders in your calendar to help you remember what tasks need to be done.

Task segmentation – break down tasks into smaller steps

It can be overwhelming to start a large task that requires a lot of energy. Try breaking a single large task into several smaller ones. It can feel more manageable to complete a series of smaller tasks rather than focusing on one large task. Marking off each task once complete can help refocus on what you can do and accomplish compared to what you can't do anymore.

Rather than “getting ready in the morning”, you may want to:

1. Get out of bed
2. Change clothes
3. Take a break
4. Wash your face and hands
5. Brush your teeth, and brush your hair
6. Take a break
7. Prepare your breakfast
8. Take a break

9. Eat your breakfast

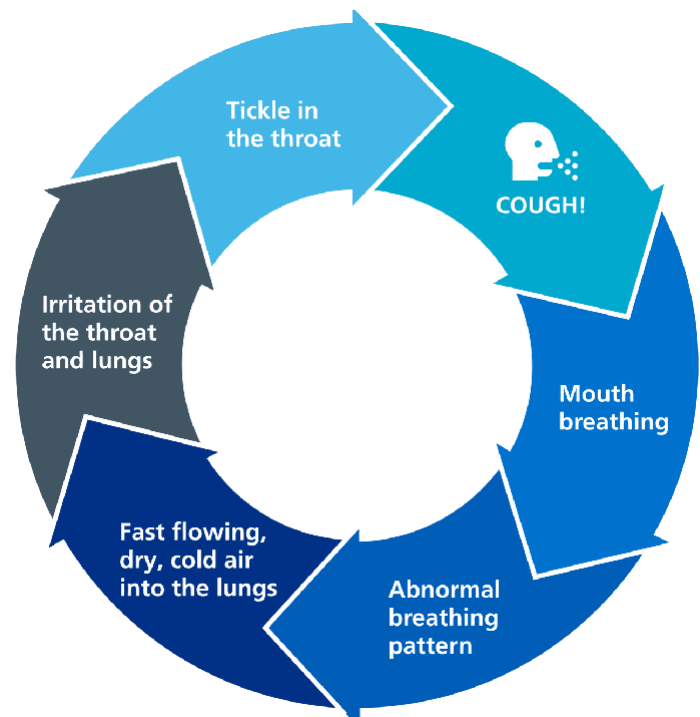
Our sections on **Attention, concentration, and memory** and **Returning to daily activities** offer more strategies that may help.

Material adapted from [MyHealth.Alberta.ca](https://myhealth.alberta.ca).

Coughing

A cough can persist for some time after having COVID-19. A cough occurs when you try to clear dust, phlegm or another irritant from your throat or lungs. Coughing can cause irritation or inflammation which can make you cough more and worsens the cycle. Breathing through your mouth can also worsen coughing because dry air enters your lungs quickly with each breath.

While you don't want to cough too much, it is important to try to clear the phlegm that causes a wet or productive cough to reduce your risk for chest infections, make it easier to perform your day to day activities and reduce how often you feel the urge to cough. You should avoid cough suppressants when you have a productive cough.



Tips to manage a cough

- Practice “normal” breathing. Breathe in gently and quietly through your nose. You should feel your belly slowly rise and fall with each breath.
- Stay upright as much as possible. You can try **breathing techniques and positions**.
- Sit in a bathroom with the closed door and a hot shower running to breathe in the steam.
- Use a humidifier at home.
- Exercise or move around.
- When you feel the urge to cough:
 - Close your mouth and swallow.
 - Slowly breathe in and out through your nose for a few breaths.
 - Stay hydrated; take frequent small sips of liquids.

- Suck on hard candies or lozenges, unless contraindicated.

Material adapted from National Health Service.

Dry mouth

Having a dry mouth can make it difficult to swallow. Saliva helps move food from your mouth down your esophagus into your stomach, but side effects from some medications or medical conditions can cause you to not make enough saliva.

Tips to help with dry mouth:

- Brush your teeth twice a day and use an alcohol-free mouthwash
- Suck on ice cubes, sugar-free popsicles, or sugar-free hard candies
- Chew sugar-free gum that contains xylitol
- Take frequent small sips of water or other sugar-free fluids
- Consider using toothpaste or mouthwash labelled for dry mouth
- Consider using lip balms and cool mist humidifiers

Try to avoid or limit:

- Salty, spicy, acidic, sugary or dry foods
- Alcohol and caffeine
- Carbonated drinks
- Smoking

Click [here](#) for more information about dry mouth.

Material adapted from Cleveland Clinic.

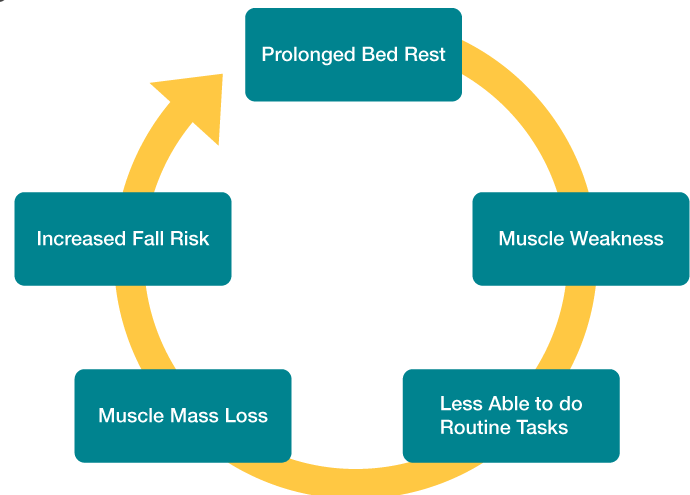
Fatigue

It is normal to feel more tired than usual as you recover from COVID-19. Fatigue can make it hard to concentrate and contributes to brain fog. Fatigue with Long COVID feels different than being tired before bed or after having a busy or long day. It is important to manage your energy levels so you can perform the activities you want or need to complete. [These strategies](#) can help you to manage your fatigue during day to day activities.

Click [here](#) to view a fatigue overview video created by the B.C. Provincial Health Services Authority or [here](#) for a video by CANCOV on taking control of your fatigue.

The fatigue from Long COVID can make it difficult to approach daily activities with the same level of energy as before you became ill. Every-day activities can take more time and energy to complete. In addition to helping you recover, resuming your daily activities and getting back into a routine can help prevent deconditioning.

Deconditioning occurs when you lose strength and endurance after a period of time being immobile or in bed. The longer you spend the majority of your day in bed, the longer it takes to regain your strength and endurance. Preventing deconditioning can help speed up your recovery.



How to conserve energy

Conserving energy is consideration about how you will use your energy. Energy conservation requires **planning, prioritization, and pacing**. The principles of **early concussion education** also apply to brain fog and fatigue in Long COVID.

Certain activities use more energy than others. Planning, prioritization and pacing are needed to balance activities and tasks with available energy. You do not need to avoid high energy activities (e.g., talking on the phone or in crowded places, going to a store or shopping mall, driving in heavy traffic or bad weather, physical activity), but you should be aware you will need a rest or break before, during or after these activities. Click [here](#) for more strategies to help with pacing from the Interdisciplinary Clinical Care Network. CANCOV has also created a [Take Control of Your Fatigue](#) video that you may find useful.

Material provided courtesy Royal College of Occupational Therapists and [MyHealth.Alberta.ca](#).

Post Viral Fatigue or Post Exertional Malaise

Many symptoms of Long COVID mirror those of chronic fatigue syndrome. Sometimes called **post-exertional symptom exacerbation (PESE)**, you may experience exhaustion that does not match the amount of energy you used. This exhaustion can occur right after activity or 24-72 hours later. You may be sleeping more, feel unsteady on your feet, find it hard to sit or stand for long periods of time or notice changes to your memory or ability to concentrate.

Try **these strategies** to balance rest and activity as you recover from COVID-19. Gradually increasing your activity no matter how you feel is **not** the best way to return to daily activity with post viral fatigue. **Pacing** is important to prevent over-exerting yourself. Talk to your

health-care provider if you have questions. Click [here](#) for more information about post-exertional malaise.

Additional resources for managing post viral fatigue after COVID-19:

- [Practical advice for people who have recovered at home](#)
- [Practical advice for people who have been treated in hospital](#)

Material adapted from *Long COVID Physio*.

Feeling short of breath

Feeling more short of breath than usual is common after being unwell because you can lose strength and endurance during illness. Shortness of breath is feeling like you can't get enough air and can be very distressing. There are [breathing techniques and positions](#) that can help decrease feeling short of breath.

If shortness of breath continues even after using the breathing techniques and positions above, speak to your health-care provider about other possible medical reasons you feel short of breath.

Here are some additional [breathing exercises for relaxation](#), [techniques to manage breathlessness](#), [focus on breath](#), and an [audio guided deep breathing exercise](#).

Material provided courtesy [MyHealth.Alberta.ca](#), CANCOV and Interdisciplinary Clinical Care Network.

Hair loss / hair shedding

As part of the hair growth lifecycle, hair naturally falls out and new hair grows in to replace it. During periods of stress, fever or illness, people can experience hair shedding where noticeable clumps of hair fall out. Two to three months after being ill with COVID-19, you may experience this hair shedding. Hair shedding is **temporary** but can last six to nine months before stopping.

There is no treatment to prevent or stop hair shedding once it has started. While hair shedding can be incredibly distressing, your hair will grow back in time once the stress or illness has resolved. To help manage the stress causing or a result of hair shedding, refer to our section on [wellbeing and mental health](#).

Material adapted from *American Academy of Dermatology Association*.

Insomnia

People with insomnia have difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep or sleeping for as long as their body needs. Insomnia can last anywhere from a few days to weeks, months or longer. It is normal to need more sleep as you recover from COVID-19 or continue to experience symptoms of Long COVID. Try not to focus on the number of hours you are sleeping. Instead, think about how you feel when you wake up – if you are not refreshed when you wake up, your body needs more rest. Your body is working hard to recover and you may need to take rest breaks or naps during the day. Be mindful of sleeping during the day because it can make it harder to fall asleep or stay asleep at night.

Strategies to sleep better

Try the following strategies to help you sleep better. Only make one change at a time and allow one or two weeks to pass before making another change. Take it slow and consider using a **sleep journal** to help track barriers and successes to a good night sleep (material provided courtesy Healthwise). Talk to your health-care provider if you continue to have difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep.

Healthy habits

- Try to go to bed when you feel tired
- Try to get out of bed at the same time each day, including weekends
- Do physical activity or exercise regularly
- Get plenty of sunlight outside
- Set aside time for problem solving earlier in the day so that you don't carry anxious thoughts to bed. Keep a notepad by your bed to write down any thoughts or worries that may keep you up or wake you up during the night
- Avoid technology such as smartphones, computers or tablets in the hours before bed
- Do a relaxing activity before bedtime, such as deep breathing, yoga, taking a warm bath or reading a book
- Click here for more tips on [Stress Management: Relaxing Your Mind and Body](#)

Food and drink

- Limit caffeine intake during the day (e.g., coffee, tea, caffeinated sodas)
- Avoid caffeine for at least 4 to 6 hours before bedtime
- If you drink alcohol, drink in moderation (3 standard drinks/day for men and 2 drinks/day for women). Drinking alcohol late in the evening can cause you to wake up overnight
- Have a light snack before bed but avoid heavy meals close to bedtime

- Have a small drink of water before going to bed – enough so you aren't thirsty but not so much you need to get up often to empty your bladder overnight

In bed

- Try to save the bed for its intended purposes
- Avoid bringing work or other stressors into bed
- Light reading before bed may help you fall asleep, but do not read for hours in bed
- Reduce or mask noise in the house with a slow speed fan, a radio tuned to static or comfortable earplugs
- Try to keep the room cool and dark. Use a sleep mask to block extra light if needed
- Turn the clock around or put in a drawer if you find yourself watching the clock and getting anxious about being awake
- If you can't fall asleep or can't fall back to sleep within 15-20 minutes, get out of bed and go to another room until you feel sleepy

Things to avoid

- Don't watch TV in bed
- Avoid naps during the day. If you need a nap, try to nap early in the day
- Avoid tobacco or nicotine near bedtime or if you wake up during the night
- Try not to lie in bed awake for too long

Click [here](#) for more information on insomnia and sleeping well, or watch CANCOV's [5 Secrets to a Superior Sleep](#) video.

Material adapted from MyHealth.Alberta.ca.

Joint and muscle pain

You may have joint or muscle pain while you are experiencing symptoms of Long COVID. It is important to get out of bed and move around if you are able. Staying in bed more than one or two days can make sore joints worse and muscles weaker. A gradual return to physical activity is important so you don't injury yourself. Try the exercises and strategies in our [exercising safely](#) section.

Strategies to improve sore joints and muscles:

- Change positions frequently (i.e., every hour), stand up if you've been sitting, take a short walk, etc.
- Do gentle stretches

- Use hot packs (20-30 minutes at a time) and/or cold packs (10-20 minutes at a time)
 - Wrap the hot or cold pack in a thin towel or fabric so you reduce the risk of burns to bare skin
 - Do not use hot packs on newly swollen joints
- Talk to a health-care provider or pharmacist about over-the-counter pain medications, but be aware of the medication's active ingredients and possible interactions with other medications
- If you get a new pain – stop and rest until the pain goes away
 - Talk to your health-care provider about sudden onset of new pain

Material adapted from [MyHealth.Alberta.ca](https://myhealth.alberta.ca).

Loss of taste and smell

Loss of taste or smell can impact how much you eat and drink. These senses are closely linked, so being unable to smell food reduces how well you can taste food and can cause a loss of appetite, putting you at risk of not getting enough nutrition.

Try these tips to overcome a loss of taste or smell:

- Choose colourful foods
- Use strong flavours, such as cinnamon, chili, mustard, or vinegar
- Prepare food with contrasting temperature and texture – hot, room temperature and cold foods, and crunchy and soft textures. If you are having trouble swallowing, refer to [Trouble swallowing \(dysphagia\)](#)
- Think about what you are eating – how it tastes, how it feels in your mouth, and how it looks

Click [here](#) for more strategies to improve taste and smell from the Interdisciplinary Clinical Care Network.

Taste and scent are also linked to mood and memories, so not being able to taste or smell can impact your mental health. Refer to our [wellbeing and mental health](#) page for more information. Be extra careful if you cannot smell, because you will not be able to smell if food has spoiled, smoke from a fire or if there is a gas leak.

Click [here](#) for information about smell training from the AbScent Network.

Material adapted from [MyHealth.Alberta.ca](https://myhealth.alberta.ca).

Sore throat and hoarse voice

A sore throat can be painful and irritating but usually goes away on its own. Try these [self-management strategies](#) to help your voice. Other strategies to help a sore throat include:

- Drinking plenty of fluids. Fluids may help soothe an irritated throat. Hot fluids, such as tea or soup, may also help decrease throat pain.
- Gargling with salt water once per hour. Mix 1 tsp (5 mL) of salt with 1 cup (250 mL) of warm water (do not swallow the salt water gargle).
- Taking over-the-counter throat lozenges or cough drops to soothe pain. Sucking on hard candy may also help. **Do not give hard candies to young children because of the risk of choking.**
- Using a humidifier at home.
- Avoiding smoking or being around those who are smoking.

Material adapted from MyHealth.Alberta.ca.

Trouble eating, drinking and loss of appetite

Long COVID can significantly impact your ability to eat, drink and speak. You may notice you are coughing or choking when you eat or drink, feel like food is stuck in your throat, have a wet sounding voice after eating or drinking or experience more chest infections than usual.

Nutritional needs

You may feel too tired or weak to eat, and notice you are eating and drinking less than before you became ill. This is normal, but preventing weight loss is important to regain your strength, build back your endurance and be able to resume your daily activities. These self-management resources can help you choose the best foods to get you on track to rebuilding your strength and endurance:

- [What can I eat at home after being in the hospital with COVID-19?](#)
- [What can I eat at home after being in the Intensive Care Unit \(ICU\) with COVID-19?](#)
- [Managing eating, drinking and swallowing](#)

Any resident of Manitoba can speak to a registered dietitian for **free** through [Dial-a-Dietitian](#). The program is available Monday – Friday from 8 a.m. – 6 p.m. by calling [204-788-8248](tel:204-788-8248) or toll free at [1-877-830-2892](tel:1-877-830-2892).

For more strategies, see [nutrition for recovery](#) from Alberta Health Services and the [resource booklet for First Nation and Métis parents in Manitoba](#) from the National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health.

Talk to your health-care provider, registered dietitian or speech language pathologist if you are having difficulty maintaining your weight because of the symptoms of Long COVID.

Trouble swallowing (dysphagia)

Difficulty swallowing, or dysphagia, usually occurs when the muscles in your throat that help you swallow become weak or damaged. Although more common in older adults, anyone can have trouble swallowing, especially after being ill. Signs of dysphagia include:

- Trouble swallowing food or liquids
- Coughing, gagging or feeling like you are choking when you swallow
- Feeling like food or liquid is stuck in your throat or chest
- Pain with swallowing
- Having heartburn, pain or pressure in your chest
- Having food or liquids come back up after you swallow (through your throat, mouth, or nose)
- Unintentional weight loss because you are not eating or drinking enough

Having trouble swallowing once or twice isn't usually a cause for concern, but if you are having difficulty on an ongoing basis, or it is impacting your ability to meet your nutritional needs, you should seek help through these [self-management resources](#) or by talking to your health-care provider, speech language pathologist or registered dietitian.

Click [here](#) for more strategies to help you eat and swallow safely.

Material adapted from [MyHealth.Alberta.ca](#).

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Adult Brain Health

On this page you will find self-management strategies and resources to help you with brain health during Long COVID / post COVID-19 condition.

[Click here for Children and Teens](#)

Attention, concentration and memory

Problems with attention, concentration and memory are common after having COVID-19. It can be difficult to ignore distractions and focus on your task, find the right words when speaking or you may find yourself forgetting things more often. Long COVID can also impact your ability to make decisions. Being tired or fatigued will make issues with attention, concentration and memory worse. Managing your energy levels is important to improve your brain health; see our sections on [fatigue](#) and [managing your energy](#) for more information and strategies to help balance your energy needs. See our [brain fog](#) section and [these other techniques](#) to help with attention and concentration. It is important to talk to your family or health-care provider if you are having trouble with your attention, concentration or memory and it is not improving.

Pay attention

Working on attention is often the best place to start. Once you are better able to pay attention to something, it will be easier to remember.

These strategies can help your environment support you to pay attention:

- Minimize extra noise. Turn off the TV or radio if you need to pay attention to something or if you are talking on the phone.
- Check your background noise. Some people find quiet background music helps them pay attention while others do not. Find what level of background noise works for you.
- Simple tasks such as writing out sentences from a book or newspaper, doing word/number puzzles or watching a short documentary on TV and then discussing it with someone after can help your attention.
- Read aloud. Reading aloud sends information through multiple senses (sight and vision) to help you process the content.
- Only work on one task at a time. Many people try to do more than one thing at a time or multitask, but focusing on a single task can improve the overall quality of the results.

Improve your memory

- Write things down. Use the notepad application on your phone or a paper notebook. Writing things down lets you see the information and makes the imprint on your brain stronger compared to just hearing it or thinking about it.
- Set a daily routine to reduce demands on your brain.
- Use a calendar (phone or paper). Record all appointments and events and enter new appointments into the calendar as soon as possible. Double-check your calendar frequently; some people get into a routine of checking their calendar in the morning and evening.
- Set an alarm or reminder on your phone to remind you what tasks you need to do (e.g., take your pills, take something out of the oven, call your health-care provider to make an appointment, etc.).
- Play memory games. Use cards or games to strengthen your memory to help you stay on track with to-do lists and your daily routine.

Problem solving and decision making

Planning is important for problem solving and decision making. With Long COVID impacting brain health, making decisions about how to address or solve a problem can feel overwhelming. It can be difficult to hold the needed information in your head to make decisions.

Try breaking down problems into manageable action items.

- Write down each step needed to solve your problem
- Write down what actions you need to take to address each step
- Review your steps to stay on track and identify any gaps in your plan
- Make changes to your plan as needed

A decision making tool can help you organize information and support you in deciding. Whether you are trying to make a grocery list and you need support for menu planning or you are thinking about where to take a holiday, [a decision making tool](#) or [problem solving tool](#) can help reduce the stress associated with decision making (material provided courtesy Ottawa Personal Decision Guide & Linda Harrison).

Making decisions easier:

- Give yourself time to think through a decision before acting
- Try not to make decisions when you are tired or having strong emotions

- Identify why it is a hard decision to make. Do you have too many choices or are you missing important information?
- Try to make decisions before action is needed so you have time to reflect on your decision

Material adapted from MyHealth.Alberta.ca and headway.org.uk.

Word finding difficulties

After COVID-19, you may notice you have word finding difficulties, which means you have trouble thinking of the right word when you are having a conversation. You may find your mind “going blank” more than usual or find yourself filling pauses with “umm”, “like” or non-specific words such as “that thing/person/place” to describe something.

Practice these strategies to find what works for you to reduce word finding difficulties:

- **Delay** – Ask for a moment or two while you work to find the right word
- **Describe** – Describe what the word does, how it is used or what it looks like
- **Synonyms** – Substitute the missing word with a word with a similar meaning
- **Gesture** – Try to describe the word by moving your hands or body. Tapping your fingers or waiving your hands in non-specific way may help trigger your brain to think of the word
- **Draw** – Make a drawing of the word on a piece of paper. You do not need to be an artist for this to be successful
- **Look it up** – Look around you for where the word may be written or a picture may be found such as a note pad, in your phone, or on a sign in the area
- **Narrow it down** – Give general information or a general category of the word you are looking for
- **Come back later** – Unless it is an urgent situation or need, you may need to take a break and try again later

Material adapted from *TactusTherapy*.

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Adult Mental Health

On this page you will find self-management strategies and resources to help you with your mental health during Long COVID / post COVID-19 condition.

People who experience symptoms of Long COVID can feel anxious, depressed or lonely as they recover. It can be difficult to know where to begin looking for resources and support. Shared Health has a [Mental Health & Wellness Resource Finder](#) that offers resources based on your current need. [These strategies](#) may help if you feel discouraged about your recovery. The [Government of Manitoba](#) and [Centre for Addiction and Mental Health](#) provide self-management strategies to care for your mental health.

[Click here for Children and Teens](#)

Wellbeing and mental health

Compassion is the feeling we have when we see someone suffering and are motivated to relieve their suffering. If you are suffering from Long COVID, this is the time to practice self-compassion. [Caring for yourself](#) can improve your ability to cope with challenging situations and overall wellbeing. These strategies may help encourage you as you recover from COVID-19. Mindfulness, deep breathing, meditation or yoga can help you be present in mind and body when going through a difficult time. If you connect with spirituality or religion, try praying, either alone or with others, and practice the rituals of your faith or spiritual path.

Click [here](#) for strategies to practice self-compassion.

Click [here](#) to watch the Spirit Guide Teachers, Video Series to guide you towards a more balanced life.

[Coping strategies and techniques](#) can help you manage your wellbeing, emotions, and set boundaries as you recover from COVID-19 (material provided courtesy N. Armstrong, J. Casey, & M. Evans; occupational therapy students, University of Manitoba).

Mindfulness

Being mindful involves slowing down and being present. By focusing on what is happening in the moment, you can balance your feelings with facts to find a solution that meets your needs. An open approach to life can reduce worry about things outside your control. Try these [mindfulness strategies](#) from Clinic Community Health.

Other mindfulness activities include:

- [A 12 Minute Guided Meditation to Welcome to Everything](#)
- [Getting Started with Mindful Movement](#)

Connecting with others

Support from others is an important part of coping with any challenges, including depression. Having depression makes it difficult to reach out for help, but it can be difficult to try to manage depression alone. When a person is depressed, it is very common to feel like withdrawing from others, even family members. Pushing back on that means reaching out rather than isolating. Start with small steps; these strategies may help you connect:

- Find one person to talk to about your feelings
- Message a friend or call them on the phone
- Ask a trusted friend or family member to regularly check in with you
- Go with someone else to an event (e.g., movie, concert, small gathering)
- Go for a walk with someone
- Have coffee or lunch with a friend, either out or at someone's home
- Set a weekly date for a meal or visit with a family member or friend
- Volunteer to help someone else
- Try a new class or activity to meet new people

Material adapted from [HelpGuide.org](https://www.helpguide.org).

Grief and loss

Almost everyone has lost something during COVID-19. You may have lost friends and family, or your job, routine or hobbies. Grief is how you experience loss. Grief can make you feel angry, shocked or sad and cause you to have difficulty concentrating, change your sleeping or eating habits or withdraw from activities you enjoy. Our [Self-Care](#) page offers self-management strategies for approaching strong emotions.

Click [here](#) for more information about grief and loss during COVID-19 from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. [MyGrief.ca](https://www.mygrief.ca) also has additional grief resources.

Depression

We all have times when we feel sad, down or depressed. These feelings can be due to a difficult situation or sometimes for no clear reason at all. These feelings are normal and will

usually get better over time, but if they are lasting for weeks or longer, or are affecting your day to day activities like going to work, school or spending time with family, you may have clinical depression. A person with depression may:

- Feel sad or down most of the time on most days
- Have changes in their appetite or energy
- Have trouble concentrating or with your memory
- Find it difficult to feel pleasure, joy or happiness
- Have a sense of hopelessness or helplessness

Click [here](#) for more information about depression from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

If your depression symptoms are mild, you may find it helpful to start with behavioral activation – setting goals and following through with activities even if you don't feel like doing anything. This might include connecting with others, participating in a game, sport, or other activity that is usually enjoyable or breaking tasks down into smaller steps so you can do the steps one at a time.

It is important to practice self-care and meet your basic health needs, like eating regularly, getting into a sleep routine and starting gentle, regular exercise such as walking.

[Wellness Together Canada](#) is an online portal for free mental health and substance use support. You can choose the support you need, when you need it. It provides a range of supports from basic wellness information to participation in a community.

[Cognitive behavioural therapy](#) is a type of research based psychological treatment. Cognitive behavioural therapy can help you identify why you are experiencing a behaviour and how you can act to make a change. It is most effective when facilitated by a trained therapist, but the principles of cognitive behavioural therapy can be used independently as part of self-management.

If you are struggling to use the self-management strategies, or your symptoms of depression do not get better or are becoming worse, talk to your health-care provider or a therapist knowledgeable in treating depression. If you are experiencing thoughts of harming yourself or another person, contact a crisis resource, call 911, or go to the nearest Emergency Department or Urgent Care Centre.

- [Manitoba Suicide Prevention & Support Line](#) (24/7) – [1-877-435-7170](#)
- Klinik Crisis Line (24/7) – [204-786-8686](#) or [1-888-322-3018](#)
- [First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line](#) – [1-855-242-3310](#)

- [Mobile Crisis Service](#) – [204-940-1781](#) or [1-877-499-8770](#)

Material adapted from Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

Anxiety

Anxiety can be useful at times, but if anxiety is impacting your ability to participate in daily life (e.g., going to work or school, being with family or friends) it becomes an issue. Anxiety can impact your thoughts, feelings, behaviours and your physical response to situations.

The Anxiety Disorders Association of Manitoba (ADAM)'s [Anxiety and Worry Support Program](#) is a free, practical, evidence-based support program to help people manage anxiety, worry and low mood. The support program consists of seven sessions delivered virtually through Zoom or by telephone. Click [here](#) for additional resources from ADAM to cope with anxiety and learn how to support others suffering from anxiety.

Click [here](#) for more information about anxiety from Anxiety Canada, and [here](#) for strategies to cope with stress and anxiety from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

[Cognitive behavioural therapy](#) is a type of research based psychological treatment that can help you identify why you are experiencing a behaviour and how you can act to make a change. Cognitive behavioural therapy is most effective when facilitated by a trained therapist, but the principles of cognitive behavioural therapy can be used independently as part of self-management.

Anxiety Canada offers [My Anxiety Plan \(MAP\)](#), a self-management program for adults with mild to moderate anxiety. Once you've created a **free** account, you can access the six online units and worksheets.

[MindShift CBT](#) is a free mobile device application that guides self-management through cognitive behavioural therapy strategies to relax, be mindful, think more effectively and take action to manage your anxiety.

If you are having difficulty using the self-management strategies, or your symptoms of anxiety do not improve or become worse, talk to your health-care provider or a therapist knowledgeable in cognitive behaviour therapy.

Material adapted from Anxiety Canada.

Post-traumatic stress disorder

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is new anxiety after a traumatic event. Being hospitalized for COVID-19, with or without receiving care in the intensive care unit (ICU), can be traumatic. When you feel threatened, your mind stores sensory information like tastes, smells, sights, sounds and feelings to warn you in the future of potential danger. With PTSD, you can experience vivid memories about the original traumatic event when you experience similar tastes, smells, sights, sounds or feelings, even when there is no danger.

PTSD may also be linked to COVID-19 if you witness severe illness, suffering and/or death due to COVID-19.

Click [here](#) for more information about PTSD and [here](#) for self-management strategies for anxiety and PTSD.

If you are struggling to use these self-management strategies, or your symptoms of PTSD do not get better or are becoming worse, talk to your health-care provider or a therapist knowledgeable in cognitive behavioural therapy.

Material adapted from Anxiety Canada.

Please note: The information on this site is not intended as medical advice. It is intended for educational and informational purposes only. Please consult your health-care provider before making any decisions regarding your health-care.

Adult Returning to Daily Activities

On this page you will find self-management strategies and resources to help you resume your daily activities with Long COVID / post COVID-19 condition and get back into a routine.

[Click here for Children and Teens](#)

Getting back to work and school

Part of recovery is getting back to regular activities. Some people feel well enough to return to work or school immediately after having COVID-19, while it can be challenging for others to return to previous activities due to ongoing [symptoms](#) of Long COVID. It is important to resume activities at your own pace, considering your energy level and presence of ongoing symptoms. As you gradually return to work or school, you will need to pay special attention to your [energy levels, nutritional intake and the quality of your sleep](#). Talk to your health-care provider if you have concerns about returning to work or school.

During your return to work or school, you may find you need a modified schedule, reduced hours or other workplace or school accommodations to start getting back to your regular activities. As you return to work or school, you may identify factors that impact your energy levels or your ability to concentrate, such as the amount of background noise or type of lighting. Getting support or assistance to adapt your work or school environment to facilitate your return will help you return to regular activities.

Returning to work

- Talk to your employer about options for a gradual return to work over a few weeks or working from home. A gradual return to work can include changes to your hours of work, duties or work space
- Discuss options to reduce non-essential tasks from your role and allow extra time to complete essential tasks
- Manage your energy by taking multiple short breaks during the day. Try to change tasks at least every hour
- Get support for childcare, if applicable
- Move and position your body:
 - Take 10-15 second breaks to look away from your computer, stand up if you are able and stretch your arms.
 - If possible, take short walks. Even going down a hallway will help
 - Change positions frequently (sit to stand or stand to sit)

- If you are sitting at a workstation:
 - Sit with your feet flat on the floor or on a footrest
 - Support your lower back. If your chair does not provide support roll up a towel or use a small cushion for support
 - Try to keep reading materials at eye level
 - Try to avoid bending, leaning or twisting from your waist

Returning to school

- Problem solve with your principal or teacher about how to continue learning at your own pace. You may need:
 - Access to recordings of lectures, or the ability to review the teacher's or a classmate's notes
 - Access to a quiet space to complete assignments or take exams
 - Extra time to complete assignments and exams
 - Access to a quiet space for rest breaks
- Most schools have some level of support for students with disabilities
 - It can be difficult, but asking for help when you need it can improve your success when returning to school. You may need additional support from a physiatrist or psychologist, a speech language therapist or an occupational therapist

Material adapted from [MyHealth.Alberta.ca](https://myhealth.alberta.ca).

Bullying or stigma after COVID-19

If you experience bullying or are treated poorly on return to work or school, get help. You are not to blame for being ill with COVID-19 and you cannot control experiencing Long COVID. Your workplace and/or school needs to work with you and help support your recovery through Long COVID like they would support a staff or student through any other persistent illness or condition.

Return to social and leisure activities

Leisure activities are fun and important for your health, socialization with others and self-esteem. Leisure activities can improve your ongoing recovery with Long COVID. Returning to leisure activities may need to be done gradually based on the symptoms you are experiencing and type of leisure activity.

Leisure activities can be classified as low, medium or high energy level. Breaking the activity down into smaller steps will help you focus on the task required. For example:

- Low energy – resting activities like reading or playing cards
 - Play simple card games for set amount of time
 - Read one or two pages of a familiar book
 - Slowly increase the amount of time at play or number of pages read
- Medium energy – light physical activity like walking or swimming
 - Start with a slow pace, walk around the block
 - Move around in the shallow end of a pool
 - Slowly increase the distance or number of laps
- High energy – heavy physical activity like playing hockey or tennis
 - Skate a slow lap around the rink
 - Do a few lunges or run a few steps while swinging your racket
 - Progress to simple drills specific to your sport

Material adapted from [MyHealth.Alberta.ca](https://myhealth.alberta.ca).

Stigma and COVID-19

A stigma is negative feelings about a circumstance, characteristic or group of people. When COVID-19 first emerged as a new viral illness, people were afraid of the unknown and looking for someone to blame. The need to blame is common when people are afraid, but it doesn't make it right.

Stigma can cause groups of people to experience discrimination and face social rejection, difficulty accessing health care, unemployment and aggression from strangers. Learning the facts about COVID-19 and Long COVID can minimize stigma and prevent harming others.

What you can do to reduce stigma

- **Speak up for others.** Challenge social media posts or people that repeat negative stereotypes blaming select groups of people
- **Be informed with accurate information.** Search for information from reliable websites and information sources. Information on websites like the [Government of Canada](https://www150.ca), [Centres for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](https://www.cdc.ca) and the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](https://www.who.int) are factual and based on emerging science
- **Think twice before sharing.** Consider the quality of the information source before sharing articles on social media. It is less likely reputable news sources will have sensational or “clickbait” headlines
- **Practice kindness.** Everyone around the world has been impacted by COVID-19, and those with Long COVID or post COVID-19 condition continue to struggle with daily

life. Be kind to people experiencing stigmatization and essential service workers just doing their jobs and trying to be safe

Click [here](#) for more information about COVID-19 and stigma and prejudice.

Material adapted from [MyHealth.Alberta.ca](#).

Exercising and being active

Exercise that is too vigorous or too soon after being ill can make your Long COVID symptoms feel worse. You may experience [post viral fatigue or post exertional malaise](#), where your body feels extremely tired or worn out after just a small amount of exercise. If you find it hard to do daily tasks, like getting dressed or showering, then it is too early to start exercising. **Be careful and take things slowly** as you start exercise or physical activity after having COVID-19. Stop and rest if your symptoms get worse while exercising and watch for any new symptoms that may appear.

Reasons to exercise

There are many excellent reasons to exercise and be physically active. Slowly building back your strength and endurance after being ill will help you feel:

- Physically stronger
- Less short of breath
- Better coordinated and more balanced
- Like your brain is less clouded
- In a better mood and less stressed
- Like you have more energy to do the things you want to do

Every little bit counts. Start slowly with 5 minutes at a time and slowly increase the length of time or difficulty of the activity to reach your goal. Don't get discouraged, it can take a long time to do all your usual activities without becoming [fatigued](#) or [short of breath](#). Talk to your health-care provider or physiotherapist if you have questions about how exercise can benefit you.

Click [here](#) for information on how to start being active.

If you usually don't like exercise or being physically active click [here](#) for strategies for how to start becoming physically active.

Material adapted from [MyHealth.Alberta.ca](#).

Exercise safely

A gradual return to exercise is important as you recover from COVID-19. [Progressing your strength and endurance](#) with targeted stretches and exercises can get you started or back to being physically active. It is important to be aware of your body and how you are feeling to avoid overdoing it and experiencing [post viral fatigue or post exertional malaise](#). Exercises should feel challenging but not be too difficult.

Stop exercising immediately and contact your health-care provider if you experience chest pain, severe shortness of breath, excessive sweating, nausea or increased pain during activity.

Tips to help you exercise safely:

- Wear loose, comfortable clothing
- Do warm up and cool down exercises before and after exercising
- Do not hold your breath while exercising
- Keep your movements slow and controlled
- Take a rest if you begin to feel tired
- You can do 2-3 short sessions a day instead of one long session
- Use a mobility aid (cane or walker) if needed
- Avoid exercising when it is very hot or cold
- Drink enough water
- Do not exercise immediately after eating a big meal
- Ask your healthcare provider or physiotherapist how or when to progress
- Exercise should be challenging but manageable

Click [here](#) for more information about exercise and Long COVID.

Material adapted from [MyHealth.Alberta.ca](#).

Please note: The information on this site is not intended as medical advice. It is intended for educational and informational purposes only. Please consult your health-care provider before making any decisions regarding your health-care.

Adult Self-Care

On this page you will find self-management strategies and resources to help you with self-care during Long COVID / post COVID-19 condition and getting back to your routine.

[Click here for Children and Teens](#)

Spiritual self-care

Having symptoms of Long COVID can be physically, emotionally and spiritually exhausting. When symptoms of an illness don't resolve quickly, you can experience a lot of questions and emotions. There are many [strategies and techniques](#) that can be used to help you cope with challenges and changes due to COVID-19.

Be present

When you experience strong emotions, be present to them. Many people are afraid of being overwhelmed by their emotions, while others may find it painful to feel their feelings. Facing your emotions is often the first step to emotional healing.

TEARS is a self-management strategy that can help when you feel overwhelmed by life stressors. Starting with five or ten minutes per day can help you process your emotions.

T – Talk to a trusted friend, counselor or a spiritual advisor, pastor, priest, rabbi, imam, etc.

E – Exercise within your limits.

A – Artistic expression. Find something you can create within the limits of your energy.

R – Record or write your experiences.

S – Sob. There is healing power in tears.

Material adapted from Dr. Christina Hibbert.

If you are experiencing strong emotions, focus on the moment. [Soften, soothe, allow: Working with the emotions in the body](#) is a 16-minute guided meditation exercise from [Self-Compassion.org](#) to help you manage difficult or disturbing emotions.

[These strategies](#) may help you face your emotions as you recover from COVID-19.

Material provided courtesy N. Armstrong, J. Casey, & M. Evans; occupational therapy students, University of Manitoba

Goal setting

Setting goals is an important part of the recovery process. Goals give you direction and focus and can help motivate you.

Short-term goals are things you can achieve in one or two weeks. Long-term goals can take weeks or months to achieve. You can often break down one long-term goal into several short-term goals so it feels more manageable to achieve. It can be helpful to write your goals down, especially if they require several smaller steps to achieve. This can help you stay on track. Consider using an [action plan](#) to keep yourself organized (material provided courtesy [Interdisciplinary Clinical Care Network](#)).

Set SMART goals

SMART goals are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**ealistic and **T**imely.

- **Specific:** Be specific rather than general.
 - “I will walk for 20 minutes three times a week” compared to “I will get in shape”.
- **Measurable:** Be creative with how you will know when you have accomplished your goal.
 - E.g., write on a calendar how many times you walk and the length of each walk.
- **Attainable:** Outline what steps you need to take to achieve your goal.
 - Plan a progression to reach your goal (e.g., start with a 5-minute walk or a walk to the corner of your block). See our [Return to daily activities](#) section for guidance on where to start.
- **Realistic:** Be reasonable. Select a goal you truly think you can accomplish.
 - If you are not used to exercising and you still experience shortness of breath, don't set a goal for yourself of running a marathon in two weeks.
- **Timely:** Your goal should have a set time frame or end date.

Material adapted from Heart and Stroke & Canadian Stroke Best Practices.

Managing your energy

The fatigue from Long COVID can make it difficult to approach daily activities with the same level of energy as before you became ill. Every day activities can take more time and energy to complete.

A basic routine can include:

- Getting out of bed in the morning after waking
- Washing your face
- Brushing your teeth
- Getting dressed
- Leaving your room for activities (e.g., going to the kitchen to eat, going to a different room to read or watch TV)
- Putting on pajamas in the evening before bed

It can be difficult to adjust to low energy levels. Take it slow and let your body get used to being active again. Take rest breaks between activities if you need. Go at your own pace and know it is OK if you only have enough energy to complete one or two activities that day. When brain fog, fatigue and shortness of breath impact your daily function, it is important to prioritize, plan and pace yourself.

- Focus on activities or tasks that are important to you and help you achieve your goals. It is OK to ask for help with activities.
- Think about your best time of day or your best day of the week to perform an activity.
- Consider ways to use your energy strategically, such as reducing trips up and down stairs by clustering small tasks, or using a basket to carry multiple small items. Include rest breaks in your planning.
- Consider how much energy an activity requires and spread high energy tasks out throughout the week. Be careful not to overdo it on your good days.

How to conserve energy

Conserving energy is considering how you will use your energy. Energy conservation requires **planning, prioritization, and pacing**. The principles of **early concussion education** also apply to brain fog and fatigue in Long COVID.

Click [here](#) for more information about conserving energy from the U.K. National Health Service, and CANCOV has created a **Taking Control of Your Fatigue** video you may find useful.

Certain activities use more energy than others. Planning, prioritizing and pacing are needed to balance activities and tasks with available energy. You do not need to avoid high-energy activities (e.g., talking on the phone or being in crowded places, going to a store or shopping mall, driving in heavy traffic or bad weather, physical activity) but you should be aware you will

need a rest or break before, during or after these activities. Click [here](#) for more strategies to help with pacing.

Material adapted from [MyHealth.Alberta.ca](#).

Eating well

Eating a variety of foods every day will help your body get the energy it needs to recover. Include foods that are high in protein, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, healthy fats and plenty of fluids. If you have had a fever, diarrhea or vomiting, fluids such as diluted juices and sports drinks are especially important to replace lost electrolytes.

These self-management resources can help you choose the best foods to get you on track to rebuilding your strength and endurance:

- [What can I eat at home after being in the hospital with COVID-19?](#)
- [What can I eat at home after being in the Intensive Care Unit \(ICU\) with COVID-19?](#)

See our [Trouble eating, drinking and loss of appetite](#) section for more tips and techniques.

Nutrition and fatigue

[Try these tips](#) if you are experiencing fatigue or shortness of breath:

- Take small bites and chew well before swallowing
- Eat slowly and take a break between bites
- Eat five or six small meals throughout the day rather than three large ones
- Snack every two to three hours, even if you do not feel hungry
- Drink most of your fluids between meals so you don't become full on liquid
- Eat foods higher in calories and protein like Greek yogurt, avocado, cheese, nut butter, etc.
- Add nutritional supplements such as energy/protein drinks, puddings, or bars

Manitoba residents can speak to a registered dietitian for **free** through [Dial-a-Dietitian](#). The program is available Monday – Friday from 8 a.m. – 6 p.m. by calling [204-788-8248](#) or toll-free at [1-877-830-2892](#).

For more strategies see [nutrition for recovery](#) and the [resource booklet for First Nation and Métis parents in Manitoba](#).

Material adapted from [MyHealth.Alberta.ca](#).

Sleeping well

Sleep plays an important role in healing and daily function. It is normal to need more sleep than usual after being ill. These strategies can help you improve the quality of your sleep.

Strategies to sleep better

Take it slow and consider using a [sleep journal](#) to help track barriers and successes to a good night's sleep (material provided courtesy Healthwise). Try to make only one change at a time and allow one or two weeks to pass before making another change. If you continue to have difficulty falling or staying asleep, talk to your health-care provider.

Healthy habits

- Try to go to bed when you are tired
- Try to get out of bed at the same time each day, including weekends
- Do physical activity or exercise regularly
- Get plenty of sunlight outside
- Set aside time for problem solving earlier in the day so that you don't carry anxious thoughts to bed. Keep a notepad by your bed to write down any thoughts or worries that may keep you up or wake you up during the night
- Avoid technology such as smartphones, computers or tablets in the hours before bed
- Do a relaxing activity before bedtime, such as deep breathing, [meditation](#), yoga, taking a warm bath or reading a book
- Click here for tips on [Stress Management: Relaxing Your Mind and Body](#)

Food and drink

- Limit caffeine intake during the day (e.g., coffee, tea, caffeinated sodas)
- Avoid caffeine for at least 4 to 6 hours before bedtime
- If you drink alcohol, drink in moderation (3 drinks/day for men and 2 drinks/day for women). Drinking alcohol late in the evening can cause you to wake up overnight
- Have a light snack before bed but, avoid heavy meals close to bedtime
- Have a small drink of water before going to bed – enough so you aren't thirsty but not so much you need to get up often to empty your bladder overnight

In bed

- Try to save the bed for its intended purposes
- Avoid bringing work or other stressors into bed.
- Light reading before bed may help you fall asleep, but do not read for hours in bed
- Reduce or mask noise in the house with a slow speed fan, a radio tuned to static or comfortable earplugs
- Try to keep the room cool and dark. Use a sleep mask to block extra light if needed
- Turn the clock around or put in a drawer if you find yourself watching the clock and getting anxious about sleep
- If you can't fall asleep or can't fall back to sleep within 15-20 minutes, get out of bed and go to another room until you feel sleepy

Things to avoid

- Don't watch TV in bed
- Avoid naps during the day. If you need a nap, try to nap early in the day
- Avoid tobacco or nicotine near bedtime or if you wake up during the night
- Try not to lie in bed awake for too long

Click [here](#) for more information about resources to improve sleep, or watch this [5 Secrets to a Superior Sleep](#) video.

Material adapted from MyHealth.Alberta.ca.

Please note: The information on this site is not intended as medical advice. It is intended for educational and informational purposes only. Please consult your health-care provider before making any decisions regarding your health-care.

Child & Teen Symptoms

While children and teens with COVID-19 typically experience milder illness, they may also experience Long COVID after being ill. The symptoms of Long COVID experienced by children and teens are similar to those experienced by adults, but strategies and techniques to manage ongoing symptoms can be different. On this page you will find information and self-management strategies for people **17 years of age and younger**. Talk to your family or health-care provider if you are experiencing Long COVID symptoms.

When self-management strategies and techniques are the same for children and teens as for adults or older adults, links will take you to the appropriate page.

Symptoms

Brain fog

Trouble with concentration, memory and thinking after having COVID-19 is often called “brain fog” and can have a big impact on daily tasks, school, work and relationships. Brain fog can be worse if you also have sleep problems, pain or mental health issues.

It is important to talk to your family or health-care provider if you are experiencing brain fog. Memory problems and challenges with thinking may improve in a few weeks or may last for months. Your health-care provider, a psychologist, an occupational therapist or a speech language pathologist may be able to help if you feel that trouble with your concentration, memory and/or thinking are impacting your daily activities and do not appear to be improving.

Our [Brain Health page](#) contains strategies that can be used by children and teens to manage day to day activities.

Our [Self-Care](#) and [Returning to daily activities](#) pages can also offer more strategies that may help.

Coughing

A cough occurs when you try to clear dust, phlegm or another irritant from your throat or lungs, and can persist for some time after having COVID-19. Coughing can cause irritation or inflammation, which can make you cough more. These [self-management strategies](#) can be used by children and teens to help manage a persistent cough.

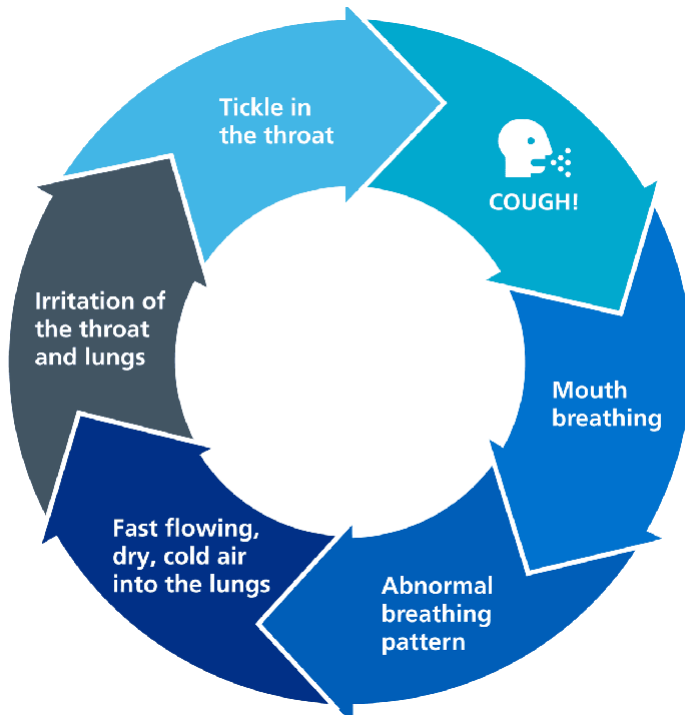


Image provided courtesy [NHS England](#)

Eating, drinking, swallowing problems

It can be challenging to get children and teens to eat well at the best of times. Having good nutrition is important to regaining energy and strength for day to day activities with ongoing symptoms of Long COVID. If your child or teen is having trouble eating, drinking or swallowing, these [self-management strategies](#) can be used.

See our [Self-Care page](#) for information and self-management strategies to help children and teens eat well.

Fatigue

It is normal to feel more tired than usual as you recover from COVID-19. Fatigue can make your brain feel fuzzy and it can be hard to concentrate. Having fatigue with Long COVID feels different than being tired before bed or after having a busy or long day. It is important to manage your energy levels so you can perform the activities you want or need to complete. Trying to do too much too soon can cause [Post Viral Fatigue or Post Exertional Malaise](#). The strategies in our [How to manage post-viral fatigue after COVID-19](#) handout can help you to manage your fatigue, and see our information on [how to conserve energy during day to day activities](#).

The fatigue from Long COVID can make it difficult to approach daily activities with the same level of energy as before you became ill. Every-day activities can take more time and energy to

complete. In addition to helping you recover, resuming your daily activities and getting back into a routine can help prevent deconditioning.

Deconditioning occurs when you lose strength and endurance after a period of time being immobile or in bed. The longer you spend the majority of your day in bed the longer it takes to regain your strength and endurance. Preventing deconditioning can help speed up your recovery.

Click [here](#) for a fatigue overview video by B.C. Provincial Health Services Authority, or [here](#) for a video by CANCOV on taking control of your fatigue.

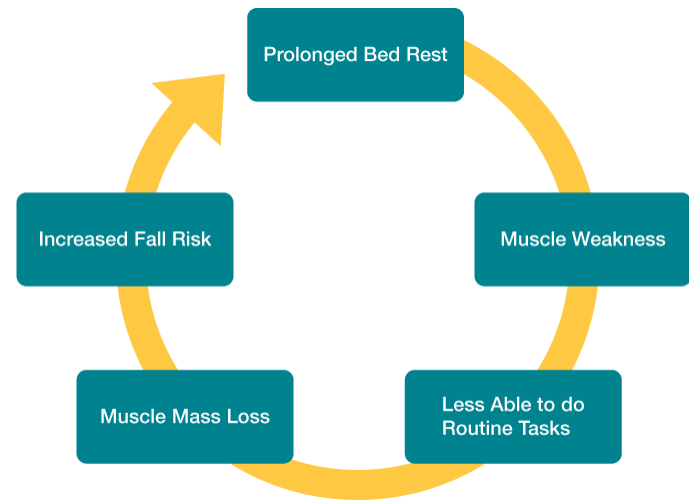


Image provided courtesy [Alberta Health Services](#)

More strategies that can be used by children and teens to help conserve energy are [available here](#).

Feeling short of breath

Shortness of breath is when you feel like you can't get enough air; it can be very distressing. Feeling more short of breath than usual is common after being unwell, because you often lose strength and endurance during illness, especially after having COVID-19. [These breathing techniques and positions](#) can help decrease feeling short of breath.

Additional Resources

- [Breathing exercises for relaxation](#)
- [Techniques to manage breathlessness](#)
- [Audio guided deep breathing exercise](#)
- [Focus on breath video](#)

Hair loss / hair shedding

As part of the hair growth lifecycle, hair naturally falls out and new hair grows in to replace it. During periods of stress, fever or illness, people can experience hair shedding, where noticeable clumps of hair fall out. Two to three months after being ill with COVID-19, you may experience hair shedding. Hair shedding is **temporary** but can last six to nine months before stopping.

There is no treatment to prevent or stop hair shedding once it has started. While hair shedding can be incredibly distressing, your hair will grow back in time once the stress or illness causing it has resolved. Refer to our [Wellbeing and mental health](#) section for strategies to reduce stress.

Material adapted from American Academy of Dermatology Association.

Insomnia

It is normal to need more sleep as you recover from COVID-19 or continue to experience symptoms of Long COVID. People with insomnia have difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep or sleeping for as long as their body needs. Insomnia can last a few days to weeks or months or longer. Think about how you feel when you wake up rather than the number of hours you are sleeping. If you are not refreshed when you wake up, then your body needs more rest. Your body is working hard to recover and you may need to take rest breaks or naps during the day. **Be mindful of sleeping during the day, because it can make it harder to fall asleep or stay asleep at night.** These [self-management strategies](#) can be used by children and teens to help improve sleep quality.

[Click here](#) for other signs and symptoms you are not getting enough sleep.

Joint and muscle pain

You may have joint or muscle pain while you are experiencing symptoms of Long COVID. It is important to get out of bed and move if you are able. Staying in bed more than one or two days can make sore joints worse and muscles weaker. A gradual return to physical activity is important so you don't injure yourself. Try the exercises and strategies on our [Exercising and being active](#) page.

[Click here](#) for more strategies for joint and muscle pain that can be used by children and teens.

Loss of taste and smell

Depending on the age and developmental ability of the child or teen, they may not be able to communicate a change or loss in taste or smell. Loss of taste or smell can impact how much your child or teen eats and drinks because these senses are so closely linked. A child or teen who is unable to smell food may not eat very much because food no longer tastes good. This can cause a loss of appetite putting your child or teen at risk of not getting enough nutrition.

You may have success offering your child or teen:

- Smaller portions
- Single foods at a time
- Colourful foods
- Foods with texture

[Click here](#) for more information about loss of taste and smell.

Material adapted from [MyHealth.Alberta.ca](https://myhealth.alberta.ca).

Resources

Below are additional resources to support self-management of symptoms and information about Long COVID / post COVID-19 condition in children and teens.

- [Association of Child Life Professionals – COVID-19 Resources](#)
- [Coping with COVID-19: A workbook for kids and teens](#)
- [ReachOut.com: Coping during coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [SickKids – COVID-19 Learning Hub](#)
- [The 2020 Covid19 Family Guidebook: Do it at home Coping skills and Activities](#)

[Click here](#) for more resources for Long COVID / post COVID-19 condition.

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Child & Teen Brain Health

Problems with attention, concentration and memory are common after having COVID-19. It can be hard to ignore distractions and focus on your task. You might have trouble finding the right words when you are talking or you may forget things more often. Long COVID can also impact your ability to make decisions. Being tired or fatigued can make any trouble with attention, concentration or memory worse.

Managing your energy levels is important to improve your brain health. See our sections on [Fatigue](#) and [How to conserve energy](#) for more information about fatigue and strategies to help balance your energy needs. It is important to talk to your family or health-care provider if you are having trouble with your attention, concentration or memory and it is not getting better.

[Click here](#) for more information about Brain Health that can be used by children and teens.

Problem solving and decision making

Being able to plan is important for problem solving and decision making. Long COVID can make it hard to think and plan, so solving a problem or making decisions can feel like too much. Here are some strategies to make problem solving and decision making easier.

1. **What is the problem or decision?** – Break down a large problem or decision into smaller steps to work on.
2. **What is your goal or outcome?** – Have a clear goal or outcome in mind.
3. **How are you going to get there?** – Think about the steps you can take to achieve your goal. Think outside the box; this is brainstorming and not all the options have to be possible.
4. **Can you ask for help?** – Try talking to a family member or friend about your problem or decision. They might have a different way of looking at the situation.
5. **What is possible?** – Focus on the ideas that are realistic. Don't discard all the options from someone else's perspective (e.g., an idea from your parent[s]).
6. **What are the pros and cons?** – Make a list of the possible good and bad from each idea.
7. **How do you feel?** – Think about your top option and write down your thoughts and feelings about it. If you don't feel good about the decision, or you are having second thoughts, go through the pros and cons again. Try to think if there are any other possible options you haven't considered yet.
8. **Pick your best option or combination of options and try it out!**

9. **Did it work?** – Evaluate if you were able to achieve your goal. If not, think about what went wrong, look at your pros and cons list, and try again.

Adapted from [ReachOut.com](https://www.reachout.com).

Word finding difficulties

After COVID-19, you may notice you have word finding difficulties, which means you have trouble finding the right word when you are having a conversation. You may find your mind “going blank” more than usual or find yourself filling pauses with “umm”, “like” or non-specific words such as “that thing/person/place” to describe something.

Practicing these strategies can help reduce word finding difficulties:

- **Fill in the blank:** Practice completing common phrases.
 - “Close the _____”; “Peanut butter and _____”; “Cover your _____”
- **Rapid category naming:** List as many things as possible from different categories.
 - For example, list as many animals as possible that start with a certain letter or list as many articles of clothing as possible, etc.
- **Provide a word from a description:** Have someone provide you a description of an item and try to guess what they are thinking of.
 - For example, a juicy and sweet fruit that is yellow on the inside and fuzzy on the outside (peach).
- **Antonyms and synonyms:** Have someone pick a word or pick a word yourself and you identify a synonym (word that means the same thing) and an antonym (word that means the opposite).

Material adapted from Speech & Language Kids.

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Child & Teen Mental Health

People with Long COVID can feel anxious, depressed or lonely as they recover. It can be difficult to know where to begin looking for resources and support. Shared Health has a [Mental Health & Wellness Resource Finder](#) that offers resources based on your current need. Resources for children and teens are highlighted in green boxes. [These strategies](#) may help if you feel discouraged about your recovery. The [Government of Manitoba](#) and [Centre for Addiction and Mental Health](#) provide self-management strategies to care for your mental health.

Mindfulness

Being mindful means paying attention to what is happening now. Practicing mindfulness can:

- Reduce anxiety and stress
- Help you cope with everyday life and challenging situations
- Improve your ability to focus, concentrate, and participate at school
- Decrease potentially disruptive behaviours
- Increase self-control and compassion for others
- Improve your overall wellbeing and conflict resolution skills

[Click here](#) for more information on being mindful. Or, try these [mindfulness activities](#), including:

- [3 minute meditation for kids – A Guided Meditation with Ammi](#)
- [4 minute meditation for kids – Ammi’s Adventures: Following Our Roads](#)

[Click here](#) for more strategies on supporting your teen’s wellbeing.

[Click here](#) for more information about wellbeing and mental health that can be used by children and teens.

Material adapted from [Mindful.org](#) & [ReachOut.com](#).

Connecting with others

Support from others is an important part of coping with any challenges, including depression. Having depression makes it difficult to reach out for help, but it can be difficult to try to manage depression alone. When a person is depressed, it is very common for them to feel like withdrawing from others, even family members. Pushing back on that means reaching

out rather than isolating. Start with small steps; these strategies may help your child or teen connect:

- Find one person to talk to about your feelings
- Message a friend or call them on the phone
- Ask a trusted friend or family member to regularly check in with you
- Go with someone else to an event (i.e. movie, concert, small gathering)
- Go for a walk with someone
- Have coffee or lunch with a friend, either out or at someone's home
- Set a weekly date for a meal or visit with a family member or friend
- Volunteer to help someone else
- Try a new class or activity to meet new people

Material adapted from [HelpGuide.org](https://www.helpguide.org).

Depression

We all have times when we feel sad, down or depressed. These feelings can be due to a difficult situation or sometimes for no clear reason at all. These feelings are normal and will usually get better over time, but if they are lasting for weeks or longer, or are affecting day to day activities like going to work, school or spending time with family, you may have clinical depression. A person with depression may:

- Feel sad or down most of the time on most days
- Have changes in their appetite or energy
- Have trouble concentrating or with your memory
- Find it difficult to feel pleasure, joy, or happiness
- Have a sense of hopelessness or helplessness

Click [here](#) for more information about depression in children and teens and [here](#) for a Parent's Guide to Teen Depression.

If your child or teen is experiencing mild symptoms of depression, it may be helpful to start with behavioral activation – setting goals and following through with activities even if they don't feel like doing anything. This might include connecting with others, participating in a game, sport or other activity that is usually enjoyable, or breaking tasks down into smaller steps so they can do the steps one at a time. These [depression self-management strategies](#) from [ReachOut.com](https://www.reachout.com) may help.

It is important for your child or teen to practice self-care and meet their basic health needs, like eating regularly, getting into a sleep routine and starting gentle, regular exercise such as walking.

[Wellness Together Canada](#) is an online portal for free mental health and substance use support. Your child or teen can choose the support they need, when they need it. Wellness Together Canada provides a range of supports from basic wellness information to participation in a community.

[Cognitive behavioural therapy](#) is a type of research based psychological treatment. Cognitive behavioural therapy can help you identify why you are experiencing a behaviour and how you can act to make a change. It is most effective when facilitated by a trained therapist, but the principles of cognitive behaviour therapy can be used independently as part of a self-management strategy.

If your child or teen is struggling to use the self-management strategies or their symptoms of depression do not get better or are becoming worse, talk to their health-care provider or a therapist knowledgeable in treating depression. If they are experiencing thoughts of harming themselves or another person, contact a crisis resource, call 911 or go to the nearest Emergency Department or Urgent Care Centre.

- [Manitoba Suicide Prevention & Support Line](#) (24/7) at [1-877-435-7170](tel:1-877-435-7170)
- [Kids Help Phone](#) at 1-800-668-6868 or text "CONNECT" to 686868
- [The Link Youth and Family Supports](#) 24hr Crisis Line at [1-888-383-2776](tel:1-888-383-2776)

Material adapted from HelpGuide.org.

Anxiety

Anxiety can be useful at times, but if it is impacting your child or teen's ability to participate in daily life (e.g., going to work or school, interacting with family or friends) it becomes an issue. Anxiety can impact your child or teen's physical response to situations, thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Anxiety Canada has resources and videos ([Fight Flight Freeze – A Guide to Anxiety for Kids](#) and [Fight Flight Freeze – Anxiety Explained for Teens](#)) to explain anxiety and self-management strategies for children and teens. Read more about [anxiety in children](#) and [anxiety in teens](#).

[Anxiety Disorders Association of Manitoba](#) has more resources to help cope with anxiety and learn how to support others suffering from anxiety.

Material adapted from Anxiety Canada.

Post-traumatic stress disorder

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is new anxiety after a traumatic event. When your child or teen feels threatened, their mind stores sensory information like tastes, smells, sights, sounds and feelings to warn them in the future of potential danger. With PTSD, your child or teen can experience vivid memories about the original traumatic event when they experience similar tastes, smells, sights, sounds or feelings, even when there is no danger. PTSD may also be linked to COVID-19 if they witness severe illness, suffering and/or death due to COVID-19.

[Click here](#) for information about PTSD in children and teens, and watch this [Symptoms and strategies for PTSD in Children and Teens](#) video.

If your child or teen is struggling to use the self-management strategies, or their symptoms of PTSD do not get better or are becoming worse, talk to their health-care provider or a therapist knowledgeable in cognitive behavioural therapy.

Material adapted from Anxiety Canada.

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Child & Teen Returning to Daily Activities

As children and teens [recover from Long COVID](#), consider decision making guides like the [Cautious Tortoise](#). Refer to the section [problem solving and decision making](#) for children and teens.

More information is also available on our [Adults – returning to daily activities](#) page that can be used by children and teens.

Returning to school

Returning to school will depend on the intensity of the ongoing symptoms. Take things slowly and use the impact of symptoms as a guide to doing more. Following the principles of returning to school and sport after a [concussion or head injury](#), be aware of energy levels, headaches, worsening concentration and other signs of over-exertion. Progress through the steps below as tolerated by your child or teen.

Step 1: Home activities

- Limit screen time to 15-20 minutes at a time
- Re-introduce daily activities such as reading and walking
- Concentrate on homework in 15-20 minute intervals with at least a 15 minute break in between

Step 2: Going back to school

- Your child or teen should go to bed at their regular time every night, including weekends, to try for 8-10 hours of sleep per night
- Start school attendance with half days at a time
- Slowly work up to full day attendance
- If concentration and fatigue persist, consider having your child or teen start attending less stressful classes first
- Plan with your child's or teen's teacher for temporary accommodation. Consider:
 - Delaying or modifying exam schedules
 - Minimize distractions by having child or teen sit at front of class
 - Having access to a quiet space in the school for short intervals to support rest breaks
- Consider how your child or teen gets to and from school and how much they need to carry daily to support [energy conservation](#)

Step 3: Back to school part-time

- Concentrate on homework for 30 minute intervals with a 15 minute break in between
- Your child or teen is attending school for the full day at least 4 out of 5 days per week
- You child or teen is attending all regular classes
- Your child or teen does not need extra support getting to and from school or being able to carry their usual book load
- Your child or teen does not need additional accommodation to minimize distractions or take exams
- Your child or teen does not require frequent rest breaks throughout the day

Step 4: Back to school full-time

- Your child or teen is “back to normal” for school attendance and workload
- If applicable, seek medical clearance to return to full practice and game play

Material adapted from MyHealth.Alberta.ca.

Returning to sports

Returning to sports will depend on the intensity of the ongoing symptoms. Take things slowly and use the impact of symptoms as a guide to doing more. Following the principles of returning to school and sport after a [concussion or head injury](#), spend **at least** one day on each of the steps below to ensure the increased exertion is tolerated by your child or teen and their symptoms don't worsen.

It is best to wait until your child or teen no longer has restrictions on school hours or school work restrictions before seeking medical clearance from their health-care provider to fully return to sports.

Step 1: Home activities

- Re-introduce daily activities such as reading, screen time, light walking or physical activity
- Start slow with 5-15 minute intervals and increase time as tolerated

Step 2: Light physical activity

- Begin with appropriate physical activities such as walking, jogging, riding a bicycle, etc.
- Start with 10-15 minute intervals twice per day

Step 3: Sport-specific activity

- Select activities for general physical conditioning like running or throwing or kicking a ball
- Start with 20-30 minute intervals twice per day

Step 4: Drills or practice

- Perform activities with a team-mate or friend
- Re-introduce resistance training and other basic skills of the sport
- Progress to more advanced skills of the sport as tolerated
- Begin participating in gym class at school and/or full team practice as tolerated

Step 5: Medical clearance

- Discuss return to full practice and game play with your child or teen's health-care provider
 - Your child or teen should have no restrictions or additional accommodations at school before seeking medical clearance for sports
- Progress to participation in competitive games

Material adapted from MyHealth.Alberta.ca.

Exercising and being active

How much exercise a child or teen needs depends on their age. The Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology provides age based physical activity guidelines for children and teens:

- [Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years \(0 to 4 years\)](#)
- [Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth \(5 to 17 years\)](#)

Click [here](#) for information about physical activity guidelines for children and teens.

Click for more information about [Exercise and being active](#) that can be used by children and teens.

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Child & Teen Self-Care

Having symptoms of Long COVID can be physically, emotionally and spiritually exhausting. When symptoms of an illness don't resolve quickly you it's normal to have questions and big emotions. There are many [strategies and techniques](#) that can be used to help you cope with challenges and changes due to COVID-19.

How to conserve energy

Children and teens have described fatigue in Long COVID as having heavy arms or legs, headaches, feeling dizzy or mixing up their words. It is not possible or safe to “push through” fatigue in Long COVID. Trying to do too much too soon can make your symptoms worse than before.

[Long COVID Kids](#) has created information about [energy conservation](#) and [Pacing Penguins](#) to support resuming daily activities. CANCOV has also created a video on [Taking Control of Your Fatigue](#).

[Click here](#) for more information about Self-Care that can be used by children and teens.

Goal setting

Setting goals is an important part of the recovery process. Goals give you direction and focus and can help motivate you.

Short-term goals are things you can achieve in one or two weeks. Long-term goals sometimes take weeks or months to achieve. You can often break down one long-term goal into several short-term goals to make it more manageable. It can be helpful to write down your goals, especially if they are made up of lots of smaller steps. Writing down what you need to do to take to achieve your goal can help you stay on track. Try using the [goal, plan, do, review worksheet](#) from Psychological Assessment Resources (PAR) to make a step-by-step plan and review the outcome.

Eating well

Using the [Eat Well Plate](#) from [Canada's Food Guide](#) can help guide food choices, with a goal of ½ plate vegetables and fruits, ¼ plate protein foods, and ¼ plate whole grains.

Get children and teens involved in nutrition:

- Try to keep a regular meal and snack schedule
- Encourage participation in [meal planning](#), preparation and cleaning up
- Participation can also include:
 - Setting the table before meals and/or clearing away dishes after meals
 - Stirring or mixing ingredients
 - Washing and chopping vegetables or fruits (be mindful age appropriateness)
 - Helping with menu planning and making the grocery list



Image provided courtesy food-guide.canada.ca

Any resident of Manitoba can speak to a registered dietitian for **free** through [Dial-a-Dietitian](#). The program is available Monday – Friday from 8 a.m. – 6 p.m. by calling [204-788-8248](tel:204-788-8248) or toll-free at [1-877-830-2892](tel:1-877-830-2892).

For more strategies, see [nutrition for recovery](#), the [resource booklet for First Nation and Métis parents in Manitoba](#), and this [“ask an expert” resource](#) for families.

Click [here](#) for other strategies to promote for eating well that can apply to in children and teens.

Sleeping well

Getting enough sleep is important for your child’s or teen’s development. [Click here](#) to find out how much sleep is enough for your child or teen. Symptoms of Long COVID can make getting quality sleep difficult. The following strategies can help your child or teen improve their sleep habits:

- **Develop a relaxing routine** – A consistent bed-time and wake-time, even on the weekends, can help your child or teen sleep better. Following the same sequence of events (e.g., bath, book, bed) every night can help prepare your child or teen’s body for sleep.
- **Healthy habits** – Having healthy lifestyle habits like regular exercise, limits on caffeine and balanced nutrition can improve sleep.

- **Limit naps** – Children 6 years of age and older do not usually need a nap. Sleeping during the day can make it harder to fall asleep at night.
- **Be comfortable** – Choose comfortable pajamas (weight based on the season) in a cool and quiet room. Ideally, the child or teen should have a mattress and pillow that supports their spine.
- **Avoid multi-tasking** – The main activity in bed should be sleeping. Avoid screen time or lots of reading in bed and limit access to television, computers/tablets and cell phones in the bedroom.

More strategies for helping your [child](#) or [teen](#) get a good night sleep are available on the SickKids website. CANCOV has also created a [5 Secrets to a Superior Sleep](#) video that can help your child or teen sleep better.

[Click here](#) for more sleeping well information that can be used by children and teens.

Material adapted from SickKids.

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Resources

On this page you will find additional resources to support self-management of symptoms and information about Long COVID / post COVID-19 condition.

[Click here for Children and Teen resources](#)

- [COVID Long Haulers Support Group Manitoba Facebook group](#)
- [Getting Back to Life after COVID-19 Content](#)
- [Government of Canada – Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Government of Manitoba – COVID-19](#)
- [Health Management Group Program Guide](#)
 - [Cognitive Behaviour Therapy with mindfulness \(CBTm\)](#) – 5 classes from 90 – 120 minutes in length
 - [Get Better Together / En santé . . . ensemble](#) – 6 classes, 120 minutes
 - [Nutrition for Busy People](#) – 90 minute virtual class
 - [Packing it in: Creating a Plan to Quit Smoking](#) – 40 minute video
 - [Physical Activity Essentials](#) – 75 minute virtual class
 - [Powerful Tools for Caregivers](#) – 6 virtual classes, 90 minutes each
 - [Preparing for Success](#) – 75 minute virtual class
- [Living with Long COVID: Local and Online Resources](#)
- [Long COVID Self-Management Group](#) – 8 x 75 min virtual classes
- [Long COVID services available without a prescriber referral](#)
- [National Health Service \(UK\) – Post COVID-19 Patient information pack](#)
- [National Health Service \(UK\) – Your COVID Recovery](#)
- [Shared Health – COVID-19](#)
- [Spectrum – COVID-19 resources toolkit](#)

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