Support for recovery after COVID-19

For some people, coronavirus (COVID-19) can cause symptoms that last weeks or months after the infection as gone. This is sometimes called post COVID-19 syndrome or 'long COVID'.

Many people feel better in a few days or weeks and most will make a full recovery within 12 weeks But for some people, symptoms can last longer. How long it takes to recover from COVID-19 is different for everybody.

The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) describes post-acute COVID-19 as "signs or symptoms that develop during or after an infection consistent with COVID-19 that continue for more than 12 weeks and are not explained by an alternative diagnosis".

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This guidance document will provide details of support available to support staff in their recovery after COVID-19.

Effects of Long Covid

There are lots of symptoms you can have after a COVID-19 infection. Common long COVID symptoms can impact on both your physical and mental well being.

Physical Wellbeing

- extreme tiredness (fatigue)
- shortness of breath
- chest pain or tightness
- heart palpitations
- dizziness
- pins and needles
- joint pain
- tinnitus, earaches
- feeling sick, diarrhoea, stomach aches, loss of appetite
- a high temperature, cough, headaches, sore throat, changes to sense of smell or taste
- rashes

Emotional Wellbeing:

- Depression and anxiety
- Managing your mood and coping with frustration
- Managing the effects on memory and concentration
- Difficulty sleeping (insomnia)

Sickness absence

Long COVID symptoms can come and go and could affect someone's ability to work or cause them to take sickness absence. Where this is the case members of staff and managers should follow the University's Sickness Absence and Monitoring Policy.

https://www.hope.ac.uk/media/gateway/staffgateway/personneldocuments/media,9104,en.pdf

If someone is off sick, they may feel isolated or need support to return to work. Managers should:

- Agree how and when to make contact during any absence
- Make sure that their work is covered and shared out appropriately while they're off
- Talk about ways to support them as they return to work where and when possible

Returning to work

Managers should talk to the individual and discuss any support they may need in preparation for their return to work. Support measures could include:

- A phased return to work
- Making adjustments to the workplace or how the employee works ('reasonable adjustments'), such as different working hours
- Seek advice from occupational health if required
- Complete Individual Health Risk Assessment
- Individuals may be anxious about the potential return to campus and should be informed of the measures taken to make the campus COVID-19 secure including sharing of risk assessments

This list is not exhaustive and cases should be considered on an individual basis. Staff are encouraged to discuss any concerns/struggles with line managers to ensure that all the appropriate support mechanisms are put into place where needed.

Your COVID Recovery Programme

Some people will need further medical follow up after COVID. The NHS have launched a programme called Your COVID Recovery. It is a new digital programme designed to support your recovery. It has been developed by experts representing a wide range of professional bodies and societies alongside people who have experienced COVID.

It will support you to restore your physical and emotional well-being.

It will have an 'ask the healthcare professional' facility to allow you direct access to local staff that should be able to answer your questions related to your recovery.

How can you get access to 'Your COVID Recovery Programme'

- A health care professional will need to refer you to a centre that will assess your needs and support you through this programme.

- Ask your primary care team or hospital team to find out if the programme is offered in your area.

Further information is available on the below link.

https://www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk/

Additional support of Staff – Information and Resources

There are a wide range of information and resources available on the University website to support staff. Details can be found on the following links:

https://www.hope.ac.uk/gateway/staff/staffwell-beingathope/

https://www.hope.ac.uk/gateway/staff/personnel/hopecommunity/

Further information

https://www.acas.org.uk/long-covid

https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/long-term-effects-of-coronavirus-long-covid/