

Functional Recovery after a COVID-19 Hospital Stay

Feeling completely back to normal may be a long process for people recovering from COVID-19, especially if the illness was severe and required a hospital stay. Health care professionals observed several symptoms that affect COVID-19 patients. These symptoms can vary by severity of illness. This fact-sheet lists several symptoms you might have during your recovery period and has suggestions for things you can do to improve your symptoms and strength.

What symptoms I might have during recovery?

Physical Symptoms

- **Weakness**

Often, patients feel weaker following a hospital stay and may have trouble doing tasks that were simple before. This may include getting dressed, bathing, preparing meals, or even standing up and walking.

- **Fatigue**

Patients have reported feeling more tired than normal upon returning home. Daily activities may lead to becoming tired more quickly or feeling the need for a nap during the day. Some patients have difficulty sleeping after being in the hospital.

- **Shortness of breath**

You may experience feeling short of breath more easily than before, even during simple daily activities. This may be due to muscle weakness, or because your lungs are still healing from illness.

Thinking, Memory, and Concentration Symptoms

- **Difficulty with memory or concentration**

You might have trouble remembering details or events after a course of COVID-19. You may also have a harder time concentrating while reading or watching television.

Mental Health Symptoms

Feeling Depressed or Anxious

- Recovery from a hospital stay can take longer than expected, which can be stressful. Performing daily activities and being with family can also be tiring. You may also experience sadness, worrying, and restlessness.
- After being diagnosed or hospitalized with COVID-19 patients may feel withdrawn from their regular leisure activities either due to isolation or physical limitations

What can I do to improve my symptoms and strength?

- **Sleep Hygiene**

- Aim for 8 hours of sleep per night
- Try to go to sleep and wake up at similar times each day
- Turn off lights, television, and cell phone 30 minutes before bedtime.

- **Energy Conservation**

- Break up tasks into smaller portions so they are more manageable
- Allow for rest breaks so you can finish activities without getting too tired
- Slowly increase your daily activity over time

- **Exercise**

- Try to get 30 minutes of activity or exercise per day. This can be broken up throughout the day.

- This includes housework, yard work, walking, or structured exercise.
- Work with your occupational and physical therapist to create a home exercise program for you.
- **Routine**
 - Establish a daily routine. This is important for maintaining your activity level and will help improve memory and thinking changes.
 - Try to go to sleep and wake up at similar times each day.
 - Do your daily tasks and chores at similar times every day. For example, take your shower, get dressed, make breakfast, and eat your meals at similar times every day.
 - Resume leisure activities as possible, even if you need to do them differently than before. For example, cook while you sit and utilize accessibility resources.
- **Ask for Help**
 - If you feel like you need further help contact your primary care doctor to see whether further outpatient physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech, and language pathology would be helpful.

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