

Long COVID Services in Waltham Forest

Information for patients and relatives

This leaflet outlines the services supporting patients with Long COVID and how to access them if you are having ongoing symptoms.

COVID-19 is a highly contagious virus that mainly affects the lungs. It is transmitted through droplets created from sneezing and coughing from those who have the infection. The virus enters the body through the nose, mouth and eyes.

What is Long COVID?

It is estimated that one in 10 people have ongoing symptoms from the time they initially become unwell with the virus for 12 weeks or longer.

Long COVID is diagnosed when these lasting symptoms cannot be explained by an alternative diagnosis. Symptoms can vary a lot, fluctuate over time and may have an impact on your ability to do your day-to-day activities.

Being diagnosed with Long COVID does not seem to be linked to how ill you were when you first got the virus. As this is a new condition, lots of research is being done to better understand what causes it and how to help people living with it.

Common symptoms include:

- extreme tiredness
- depression and anxiety
- breathlessness
- fast heart beat
- widespread pain
- chest pain or tightness
- changes in taste and smell
- changes in sleep/difficulty sleeping
- pins and needles
- difficulty concentrating and memory (“brain fog”)

Please note: there are many others symptoms which might not be listed. **If you are experiencing any ongoing symptoms, it is important to contact your GP to discuss these further.**

Your GP will discuss your symptoms with you in more detail. They will take your blood pressure, check your pulse rate, listen to your chest and check your oxygen levels. You will be asked to have a blood test and may also be sent for other investigations such as a chest x-ray or heart scan before being referred to the Long COVID Service.

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If you and your GP think you have Long COVID; you are aged 18 years and above; with symptoms which are having an impact on your everyday life, then you may benefit from a referral to the Long COVID service.

The Long COVID Service is a multi-disciplinary service specifically set-up to support patients experiencing symptoms of Long COVID.

The team is made up of the following members:

- Occupational Therapists
- Physiotherapists
- General Practitioners
- Rehabilitation Support Workers
- Psychologically Trained Staff
- Administrative Staff

If you are referred and accepted by the Long COVID Service you can expect a telephone assessment with one of the above clinicians to further discuss your symptoms. These assessments typically last between 30-45 minutes and you will be asked to discuss your symptoms as well as the impact these are having on everyday life.

Following the assessment, the clinician will discuss your symptoms with other members of the team to collectively agree the most appropriate way to support you.

How can I be supported?

Support for Long COVID depends on the symptoms you are experiencing and the impact on your day-to-day life. The Long COVID Service may suggest:

- Onward referrals to other organisations or services which may be able to support you
- Rehabilitation support which is currently being set-up by the Long COVID service including group-based intervention
- Support in the community including things such as support with finances and living a healthy lifestyle
- Access to self-management material allowing patients to support themselves.

For more information on long COVID and national support available, visit <https://www.post-covid.org.uk/> and <https://www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk>

Where can I get further information?

If you have any symptoms that could be long COVID, please speak to your doctor.

For more information on our local long COVID support services, please visit our web pages: <https://www.nelft.nhs.uk/information-and-advice-on-long-covid>