

Fatigue

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Causes of fatigue

There are many causes of fatigue other than long COVID and often people have more than one cause. It is important to discuss your fatigue with a doctor so that other potential causes can be diagnosed and treated right away. Even if they are not the main reason you are experiencing fatigue, these other causes can make your long COVID symptoms worse.

Below are just a few causes of fatigue that are common after a COVID-19 infection:

Cause of fatigue and other symptoms

Sleep apnea

- Snoring, gasping for air at night, unrefreshing sleep, morning headaches, drowsiness during the day

Insomnia (poor sleep)

- Unable to fall asleep when you first go to bed, waking up in the middle of the night and not being able to fall back asleep

Depression

- Feeling unhappy or sad, little interest or pleasure in doing things, poor concentration or indecisiveness, sleeping too much or too little, increased or decreased appetite, having thoughts of harming yourself or others, thoughts of death and dying, feeling worthless or guilty

Iron deficiency anemia

- Lightheadedness, shortness of breath, palpitations, leg cramps, excessive craving for ice, hair loss, pale appearance, headaches



What is fatigue like in long COVID?

Fatigue is one of the most common and most debilitating symptoms for those with long COVID.

The feeling of fatigue from long COVID is more than just “feeling tired.” It is an overwhelming sense of exhaustion that can make it harder for you to do everything you would like to do, including physical, mental, and social/emotional tasks and activities. Fatigue can prevent you from doing your day-to-day activities.

Fatigue from long COVID doesn’t always get better with rest and it may last for several days. You may find when you try to “push” through your symptoms to return to your usual activities, your fatigue gets much worse and you “crash.” This is referred to as the **push/crash cycle** and it can significantly impact your quality of life, as well as prolong your recovery. You can learn more about this type of fatigue [here](#).

The exact cause of fatigue in long COVID is unknown. For some people with long COVID, the fatigue experienced is similar to what is experienced by people who have myalgic encephalitis/chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS). We are trying to understand how COVID and ME/CFS may be related.

What can you do?

Pacing is an evidence-based treatment for symptoms of long COVID, including fatigue (You can learn more about Pacing [here](#)). There is some understanding that the earlier in your recovery you are able to pace and avoid the push/crash cycle, the more quickly you may be able to recover from long COVID.

We suggest reading about [Post-Exertional Malaise](#) next to help you better understand this type of fatigue related to long COVID.

Other strategies that have been shown to be helpful are explained in other parts of this *MyGuide*.

- [Pacing](#)
- [Breath Work](#)
- [Energy Conservation](#)
- [Sleep Hygiene](#)

Where to next?

- Read about [Post-Exertional Malaise](#) next to help you better understand a type of fatigue related to long COVID called the push/crash cycle.
- Learn more about other strategies: [Pacing](#), [Breath Work](#), [Energy Conservation](#), and [Sleep Hygiene](#)

