

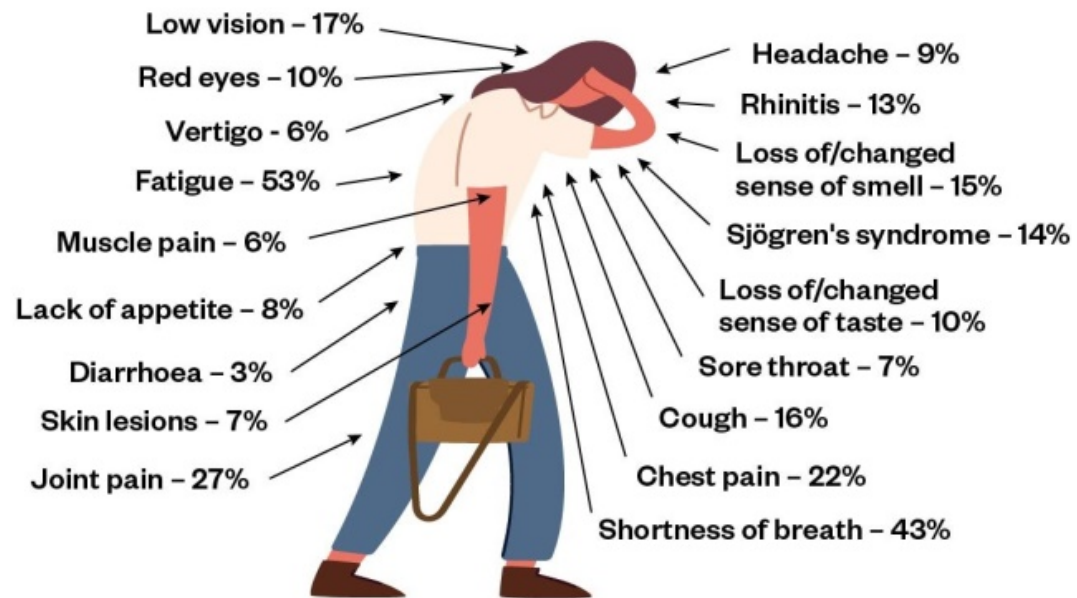
Post-Covid Syndrome at work

What is post-Covid Syndrome

| Stages of recovery | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Acute Covid | Up to 4 weeks Normal recovery – no intervention needed |
| Ongoing symptomatic Covid-19 | 4-12 weeks Prolonged Recovery – mild support beneficial |
| Post-Covid Syndrome | More than 12 weeks after illness Not explained by alternative diagnosis Specialist support/advice may be needed |

What is post-Covid Syndrome

- Defined as:
 - *A collection of symptoms that develop during or following a confirmed or suspected case of Covid-19 which continues for 28 days or more*
- Research shows majority of patients do not have any pathological cause
- No longer infectious
- Symptoms:
 - Up to 205 symptoms
 - Fluctuating and unpredictable
 - Affect multiple organs
 - Relapsing and remitting



What are the ongoing symptoms

| Symptom | What do people struggle with |
|--|---|
| Fatigue (91%) and Post-exertion Malaise (PEM) | A sense of tiredness that doesn't go away Waking up and don't feel refreshed Most common symptoms and increased chance of developing it in first 2 months |
| Brain fog / cognitive dysfunction (85% of people) | Unable to concentrate Difficulty thinking Loss of memory Difficulty problem solving or making decisions Impacts ability to work |
| Mood and emotions (88% experience) | Anxious Irritable Depressed Mood swings |
| Sleep difficulties (78%) | Insomnia (unable to get to sleep / waking up and not getting back to sleep) |

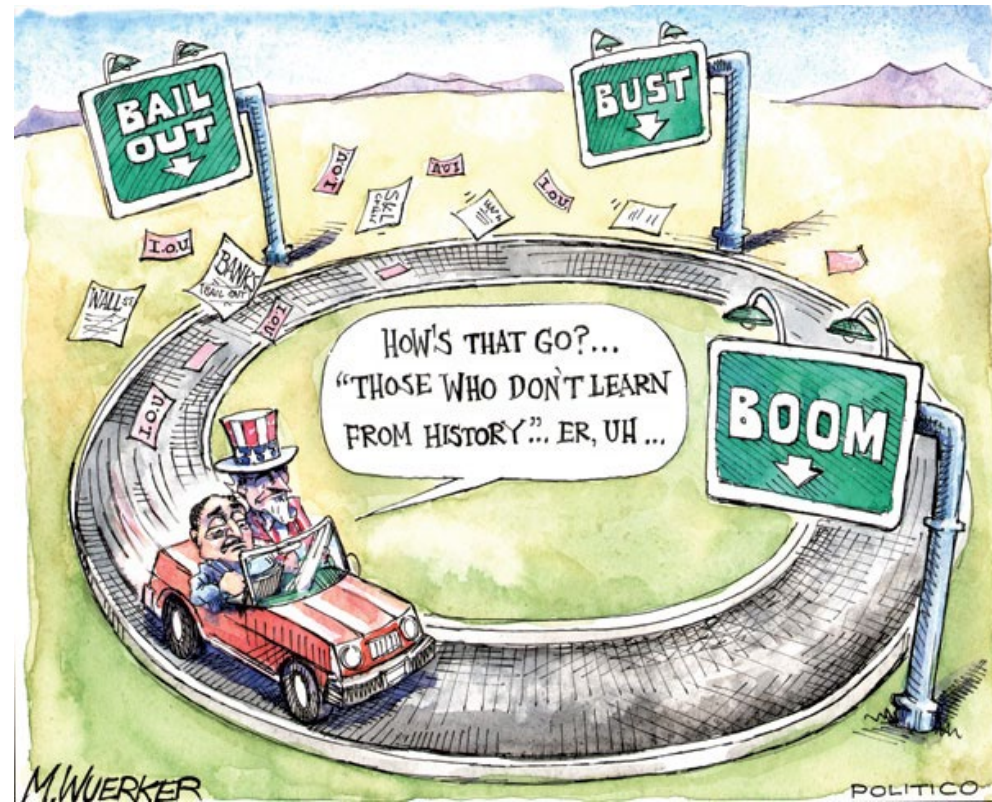
What are the ongoing symptoms

| Symptom | What do people struggle with |
|--|--|
| Pulmonary and respiratory conditions (93%) | Shortness of breath Dry cough Breathing difficulties |
| Cardiovascular (86%) | Heart palpitations Tachycardia (Racing heartbeat) Orthostatic intolerance Pain / Burning in the chest |
| Gastro conditions | <i>Diarrhoea</i> <i>Vomiting</i> <i>Loss of appetite</i> |
| Neuropathic pain | Burning sensation Pins and needles |
| Musculoskeletal problems (93%) | Tight feeling in the chest Muscle Aches Joint Pain Unable to do activities/exercise due to the |

How do I know it is Post-Covid Syndrome?

Boom-Bust Cycle

- Symptoms that come and go, change nature and affect people differently
- Did it?
 - Start after a Covid-like illness
 - Does it follow a symptom burden cycle?
 - Have the doctors not been able to find a medical reason for the symptoms?

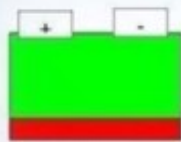


Helpful messages

- Validate the experience
 - Listen
 - Recognise it is real
 - They are not making it up
- Recognise the impact of the fatigue
 - Are symptoms worse when they are tired?
 - What activities use energy – physical and cognitive
- Listen to their body
 - Supporting people to give permission to themselves to ‘be sick’
 - Try not to push back to normal life
- Mind-body approach
 - Permission to rest
 - Treat themselves with kindness and compassion
 - Keep activities simple

Helpful Analogies: The Battery

When you are healthy:



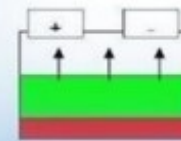
In the morning
the battery is filled



In the afternoon energy is
used
for mental activities
there is plenty
of energy left



In the evening
a substantial part
of the energy
is used



In the nights the
battery is
recharged again

When you are ill, for example after brain injury or MS



In the morning,
the battery is partly filled.
This is the maximum attainable



In the afternoon,
after a few mental
activities
the battery is almost
empty



In the evening or
sometimes even before,
the battery is empty



At night the battery
tries to recharge, but
it is not a strong battery;
It cannot be fully charged.

Helpful Analogies: The Piggy Bank



What we will cover

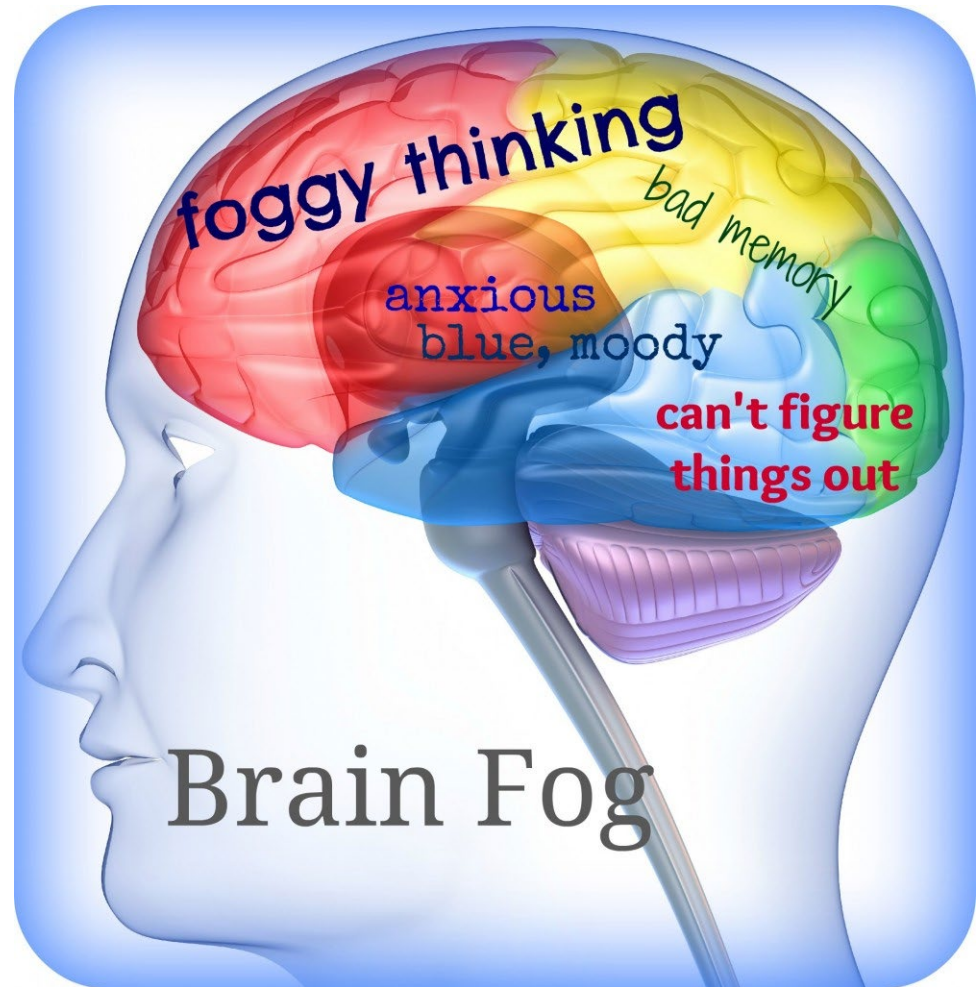
1. Post-Covid Syndrome and the impact on work?
2. What to do to support a person back to work?
3. What support is available?
4. Additional resources

How does Long Covid impact work

- Work requires us to be alert, responsive and social

HOWEVER

- People may find it difficult to:
 - Concentrate
 - Multi-task
 - Think
 - Remember things
 - Solve problems



Returning to work

- [ACAS Employment support](#)
 - www.acas.org.uk
- Equality Act 2010:
 - Disability is a protected characteristic
 - Employers are expected to provide adjustments and reasonable accommodation to support people back into work

Reasonable adjustments

- Adjusting the work role to change:
 - The task itself
 - How a person does the task
 - Where a person does the task
 - When a person does the task
- Consider the impact of work on the rest of life and the impact of life on work

Phased return

- Attempt to be flexible
- Limit days in week
- Create breaks between days at work
- Create breaks within the work day

Recognise there will be an initial slump and plan for it

Rest breaks

- 5 minutes every hour
- 20 minute rest in the middle of the morning
- 45 minute nap if possible in the middle of the day
- 20 minute rest again in the afternoon

Create a plan

- Identify triggers and attempt to create a working routine that manages them
- Identify most productive time of day for biggest tasks
- Start with light tasks before
- Create a work routine – including planning sufficient time to get ready. Aim to have a short break between pre-work routine and starting work (rejuvenate and recharge to start)
- Create to – do lists at beginning and end of each day to identify important tasks
 - If work comes in put it on the to-do list and prioritise it for the next day
- Put in 15 minutes between meetings to complete any actions/tasks and have a screen break

Managing tasks

- Complete one task at a time
- Do a task slowly and you will avoid needing to do it twice
- Set a time-frame to work for
- Provide a rest buffer between tasks
- Use reminders:
 - Alarms
 - To – do lists
 - Ask people to send a follow up email after conversation / meeting
 - Ask if you are able to record the meeting / conversation in order to remind your self later

Managing emails and communications

- Avoid constantly replying to emails – rather do it at set times in the day
 - Set an automatic reply if needed
 - Print off long emails and read them and respond slowly
 - Avoid instantly replying to long and lengthy emails
- Avoid answering telephone during a task – Request person to call back at set time or to leave number and call them at the set time (block off time in your diary to do telephone calls)
- Meeting management

Structure your day

- Determine most productive time of day for high intensity tasks
- Split high intensity tasks with less intense tasks
- Avoid multi-tasking
- Regular breaks – gentle exercise and ‘proper shut-eye’
- *Rule of thumb 5 minutes silence break every hour*

Eat well

- Good breakfast
- Avoid snacking
- Avoid sugar and caffeine
- Use high protein snacks if needed
- Pre-cook dinners if needed (ie bulk cook over weekends and freeze and defrost)
- Don't eat in front of the screen

If feeling tired – a break is better than a snack!

5 minutes is all you need

After work

- Recognise high intense energy requirement of work
- Avoid additional intense exercise
 - Gentle walking / stretching could be helpful
- Rest after work
 - If unable to have short nap during day, attempt to include 20 minutes after work
- Reduce screen time
- Invest in quiet time where possible
- Good sleep routine
 - Go to bed early
 - Hot bath to help sleep
 - Meditation / white noise

Environment

- Reduce background noise

Resources for support

Equality Advisory Support Service (EASS)

- If you have experienced discrimination, you can get help from the EASS discrimination helpline
- The EASS helpline is open Monday to Friday 9am to 7pm and Saturday 10am to 2pm.
- Freephone Telephone **0808 800 0082**
- Live online chat service also available
- <https://www.equalityadvisoryservice.com/app/ask>

ACAS

- <https://www.acas.org.uk/reasonable-adjustments>
- If you have a workplace problem you want to talk with us about, you can call the Acas helpline.
- We can help talk through your options. You do not have to give any personal details.
- 0300 123 1100

Resources for support

- Access to work:
- [Get support in work if you have a disability or health condition \(Access to Work\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/get-support-in-work-if-you-have-a-disability-or-health-condition)

Resources

- [Work and Health - e-Learning for Healthcare \(e-lfh.org.uk\)](http://e-lfh.org.uk)