# New research highlights growing concerns over long Covid in England



Recent research indicates that a significant portion of the population in England is grappling with concerns related to long Covid. A study from the University of Southampton, published in the journal Health Expectations, reveals that 9.1% of individuals suspect they may be suffering from the condition, while approximately 4.8% have explicitly reported having long Covid. Notably, the incidence is more prevalent in deprived areas and is particularly observed among specific ethnic groups, as well as parents and carers, and those with ongoing health issues.

Fatigue stands out as one of the hallmark symptoms associated with long Covid, prompting experts to explore how this may differ from ordinary tiredness. Dr Naveed Asif, a GP at The London General Practice, outlines a range of common complaints including persistent fatigue, shortness of breath, joint and muscle pain, memory problems, sleep disturbances, and even changes in taste or smell. “The symptoms can be vague and generalised,” Dr Asif explains.

Distinguishing between regular fatigue and long Covid fatigue can be challenging. Dr Margaret O’Hara, founder trustee and lead of research at Long Covid Support, notes, “It’s a very unusual type of fatigue, and that you haven’t done anything that would warrant you being tired, you’ve just been living your normal life.” Symptoms can escalate with minimal exertion, suggesting that activities like walking short distances or engaging in routine tasks can leave individuals feeling overwhelmingly fatigued.

In terms of timing, long Covid can manifest between two to six weeks following the initial infection from COVID-19. Dr Asif identifies that symptoms may last several weeks to months, but there are instances where they persist for years. The variability of symptoms can be especially frustrating; O’Hara highlights that individuals may feel as though they are recovering only for symptoms to recur unexpectedly.

For those experiencing persistent fatigue, consultation with a healthcare professional is critical to rule out other serious conditions. Dr Asif emphasises, “It’s very important that a doctor assesses you if you’re having persistent symptoms of fatigue.” Clinical assessments may include blood tests to check for anaemia, hormonal imbalances, and nutritional deficiencies, along with imaging scans to evaluate cardiovascular health.

Management strategies for long Covid fatigue are diverse but may not yield a definitive cure. Sammie McFarland, CEO of Long Covid Kids, discusses pacing as a potential approach, which involves balancing activity with rest to prevent energy crashes. “Pacing is a useful strategy, but isn’t curative, and takes time to learn,” McFarland acknowledges.

Medication may also be an option for some symptoms; Antihistamines and beta-blockers, for instance, are prescribed in certain cases. Furthermore, optimising sleep hygiene, adequate hydration, and nutritional intake are highlighted as important factors in managing symptoms. Gentle physiotherapy may also provide benefits.

For those whose fatigue interferes significantly with daily life, seeking specialised care from a paediatrician or a long Covid specialist, if available, is recommended. McFarland advises individuals to advocate for themselves if symptoms persist, stressing the importance of addressing any severe or lasting challenges to health and wellbeing.

This evolving understanding of long Covid underscores the importance of continued research and dialogue around its implications and management strategies.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.manchester.ac.uk/about/news/regional-inequalities-in-long-covid-rates-revealed/> - This article supports the claim that long Covid is more prevalent in deprived areas and highlights regional inequalities in England, particularly in the North.
* <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8813118/> - This study discusses the socioeconomic inequalities in long Covid prevalence, noting that deprived populations have a greater risk of serious illness and limited access to healthcare.
* <https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/covid-19/uk-studies-highlight-prevalence-severity-and-impact-long-covid-symptoms> - This report highlights the prevalence and impact of long Covid symptoms, including fatigue, and notes demographic factors influencing symptom severity.
* <https://www.manchester.ac.uk/about/news/regional-inequalities-in-long-covid-rates-revealed/> - The article also mentions that fatigue is a common symptom of long Covid, which aligns with Dr. Asif's description of persistent fatigue as a hallmark symptom.
* <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8813118/> - This study further emphasizes the need for tailored healthcare strategies to address long Covid in deprived areas, aligning with the importance of clinical assessments and management strategies discussed in the article.
* <https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/covid-19/uk-studies-highlight-prevalence-severity-and-impact-long-covid-symptoms> - The report supports the idea that understanding symptom severity and prevalence is crucial for developing effective management strategies for long Covid, such as pacing and optimizing sleep hygiene.