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Tackling Long Covid in the context of work

IOSH Webinar 19 Aug 2021

Healing the scars of a pandemic: tackling a future of Long Covid



What is Long Covid?

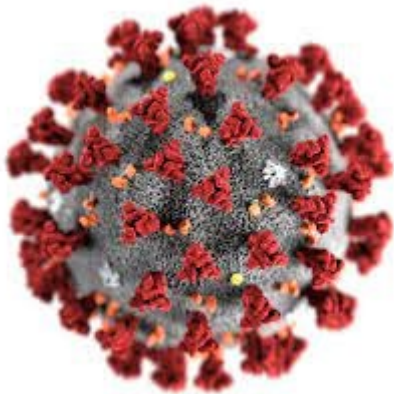
- New syndrome, still being investigated
- **Pseudonyms: Post Acute Sequelae of Covid-19/ Long Haul Covid**
- **Ongoing Symptomatic Covid-19** describes patients who between 4 & 12 weeks after onset of acute symptoms⁽¹⁾ are still symptomatic, estimated as 1 in 5⁽¹⁾
- **Post Covid-19 syndrome** describes patients still symptomatic >12 weeks after onset of acute symptoms, estimated 1 in 10⁽¹⁾

Global Worldometer for Covid-19

as of 17 Aug 2021

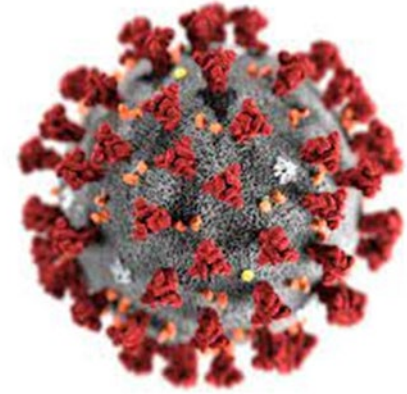
Covid-19 or Coronavirus Cases:

208,941,288



Deaths:

4,388,147



Recovered:

187,316,024

Estimated Potential Long Covid Cases

1,873,160

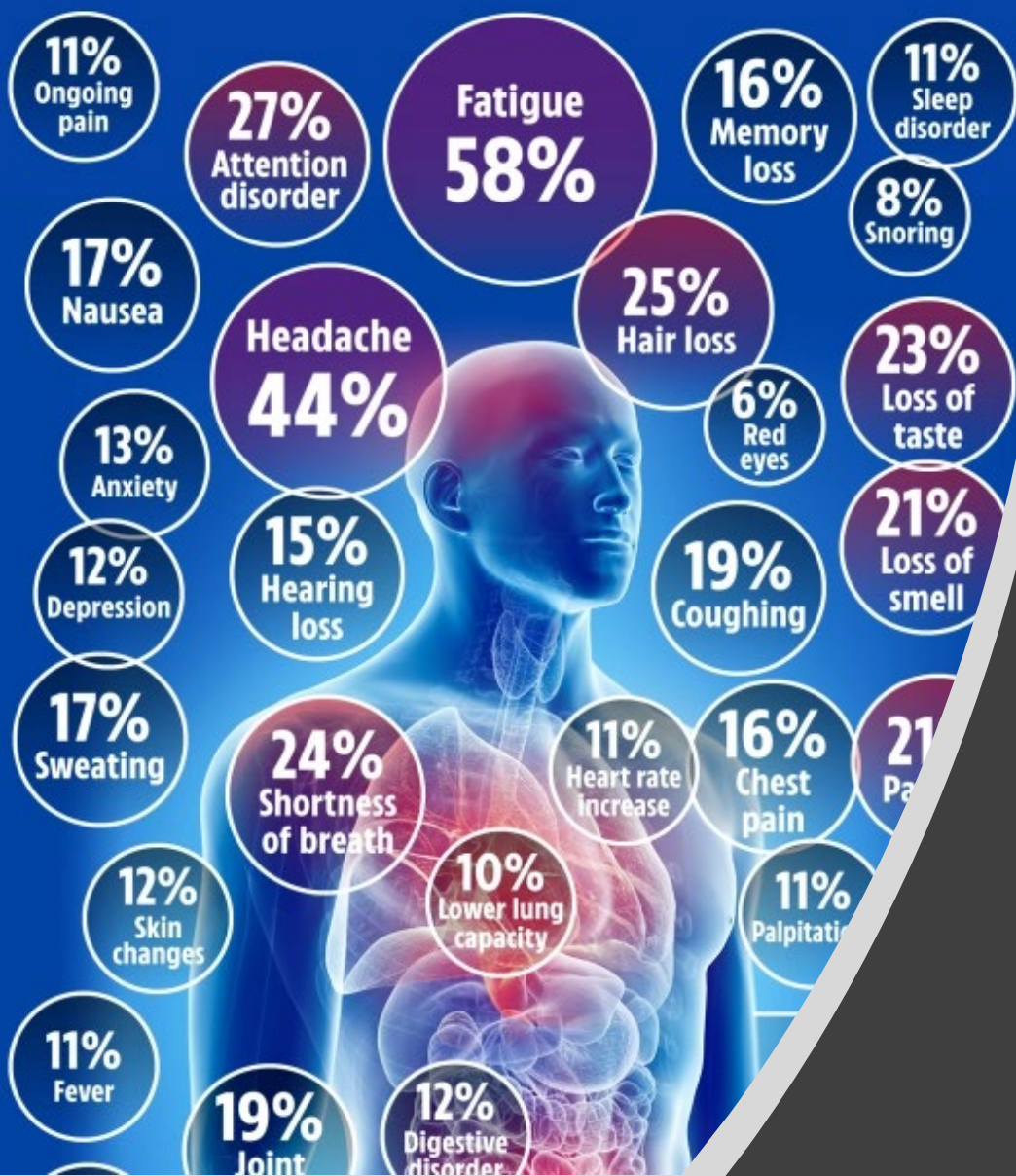
(Conservative estimates)

Source: <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>

Who gets Long Covid?

- Complex and challenging as not just those hospitalised with life threatening Covid-19 affected
- More likely in people with^(4,5)
 - pre-existing health conditions (e.g. diabetes, asthma, hypertension),
 - older people (>50 years),
 - overweight individuals,
 - women, and
 - patients with 5 or more symptoms in first week of Covid-19 infection

HOW MANY PEOPLE SUFFER WITH EACH LONG COVID SYMPTOM



Over 50 symptoms of Long Covid⁽²⁾

Symptoms – diverse affecting multiple systems respiratory, nervous system, cardiovascular, musculoskeletal

Most common- fatigue, shortness of breath, muscle pains, chest pain, brain fog, headache, depression

Image source: The Sun (3)

Consequences of Long Covid

Health



- Persistent and fluctuating symptoms
- Debilitating impacts on health
- Ongoing rehabilitation needs

Work



- Ability to return to work (RTW) safely
- Linking abilities to work demands
- Managements attitude to accommodating RTW

Social and Economic



- Financial impact on individual / society
- Social attitudes to sufferers
- Social security systems

Impact on ability to work (5,6,7)

Impact of Long Covid

- 84% limited their activity
- 81% brain fog hinders their concentration
- 85% persistent fatigue
- 49% difficulty handling stress & doing basic tasks

Limit intensity and duration of work

- Long Covid affected ability my to work - 75%
- 60% - took time off due to Long Covid
- 45% of sufferers will RTW with reduced capacity

Returning to work and Long covid

‘For many it is a case of returning to work with Long covid and not after Long Covid’

- Worklessness kills – need to facilitate RTW
- Workers do not need to be 100% fit to work
- Work is an important part of recovery process

- Considerations
 - Employment rights and benefits
 - Access to benefits (healthcare, sick leave, financial support)
 - Disability packages

OSH Professional Role

- Sees those with function but with limitations
- Facilitate a safe and healthy RTW
- Based on abilities rather than disabilities



OSH Professional Role (cont.)

- Planned, supportive, coordinated RTW
- Multi disciplinary approach (Mx, safety, health)
- Case by case management (safety critical tasks)
- Individualised risk based approach (fitness to work)
- Phased approach to RTW (short days)
- Flexibility, accommodation, hybrid working
- Frequent reassessment and accommodation adjustments



Worker
with Long
Covid

Long Covid Resources

- **IOSH – Coronavirus**

<https://iosh.com/coronavirus/>

- **NHS Supporting your recovery after Covid 19 -**

<https://www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk/>

- **NICE Long Covid Guidelines -**

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng188>

- **SOM Covid 19 return to work guide for managers -**

https://www.som.org.uk/COVID-19_return_to_work_guide_for_managers.pdf

- **Long Covid Support**

<https://www.longcovid.org/>

References

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