

Post-COVID Conditions

Background

Post-COVID conditions (PCC) are broadly defined as signs, symptoms, and health conditions that continue or develop after an initial SARS-CoV-2 infection. Those experiencing persistent or lingering symptoms four weeks or more after the initial phase of infection can be diagnosed. Signs and symptoms may be multisystemic, present in a relapsing-remitting pattern, and evolve over time. The condition can last weeks, months, or even years after infection. Because anyone who has been infected with COVID-19 can develop lingering symptoms, preventing the initial infection remains critical.

The wide variety and severity of PCC symptoms can affect an individual's physical, cognitive, and mental health. The most widely reported symptoms include general fatigue and symptoms that worsen after exertion (both physical and mental). "Brain fog" or the cognitive state characterized by difficulty concentrating or thinking also continues to be commonly reported. Other symptoms associated with PCC include:

- Memory issues
- Headache
- Sensory changes (e.g., pins and needles, change in smell or taste)
- Shortness of breath, cough
- Chest pain, heart palpitations
- Stomach pain, diarrhea
- Fever
- Muscle or joint pain

Management strategies for PCC closely align with interventions used for similar symptom patterns seen in chronic conditions such as Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS) and concussion. Care is individualized to meet each student's specific needs, with primary focus areas typically including physical strength, functional capacity, cognitive processing, and memory. Treatment plans often emphasize gradual progression, symptom pacing, and targeted support to optimize both physical and cognitive recovery.



Top Takeaways for School

The determinations for eligibility services under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or Section 504 will be made on an individual basis for students experiencing PCC or other conditions that have arisen because of COVID-19.

A student may require new or different related services, specialized instruction, or reasonable modifications based on current symptoms. Revisiting an existing IEP or 504 after a diagnosis of PCC may be necessary.

School plans should focus on energy management (both physical and mental). Prioritizing, pacing, and planning will support energy demands for student success.

Symptoms can be new, returning, or ongoing making it important to have a dynamic school plan.

Considerations for the Individualized Healthcare Plan (IHP)

- Nursing diagnoses: Fatigue, impaired thought process and risk for injury
- Activity, positioning, transferring (consider precautions and/or restrictions)
- Temperature regulation considerations in school setting and transportation
- Consider emergency action plans (EAPs) and emergency evacuation plans (EEPs) related to special health care needs, including staff education/training

Discussion Starters for the Educational Team

1. Would the student benefit from evaluations or assessments in any of the following areas: physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, assistive technology, adapted physical education, functional behavior, psychology, hearing and vision?
2. Would the student benefit from additional academic support and/or modified education (e.g., copies of notes, extra time, reduced workload, simplified instructions, alternative formats for presentation of material, 504/IEP)?
3. Would schedule flexibility support the student?
4. Can rest breaks, safe spaces, or reduced stimulation times be built into the student's schedule?

Resources

Kennedy Krieger Institute: Pediatric Post-COVID-19 Rehabilitation Clinic
[kennedykrieger.org/patient-care/centers-and-programs/pediatric-post-covid-19-rehabilitation-clinic](https://www.kennedykrieger.org/patient-care/centers-and-programs/pediatric-post-covid-19-rehabilitation-clinic)

Your Child's Brain Podcast
[kennedykrieger.org/stories/your-childs-brain-podcast](https://www.kennedykrieger.org/stories/your-childs-brain-podcast)

Long COVID Families
[longcovidfamilies.org](https://www.longcovidfamilies.org)

U.S. Department of Education: Long COVID under Section 504 and the IDEA
[sites.ed.gov/idea/files/ocr-factsheet-504-20210726.pdf](https://www.sites.ed.gov/idea/files/ocr-factsheet-504-20210726.pdf)



For more information, please scan the QR code or visit: [KennedyKrieger.org/SHNIC](https://www.KennedyKrieger.org/SHNIC)

