



Kennedy Krieger Institute

Specialized Health Needs Interagency Collaboration

Supporting a Student with Long-COVID

Considerations for Educators

Long-COVID, also known as post-acute sequela of SARS-CoV-2 (PASC); post-acute COVID-19; chronic COVID, or the umbrella term post-COVID conditions; has been defined as a wide range of new, returning or ongoing symptoms and clinical findings **four or more weeks** after initial COVID-19 infection. Such signs and symptoms cannot be explained by an alternative diagnosis. There has been no correlation between the severity of COVID-19 and this post-acute long-COVID disease; meaning that even if the student experienced a mild or asymptomatic COVID-19 infection, the symptoms of long-COVID could be significant.

Symptoms can be new, returning, or ongoing making it important to have a dynamic school plan. These symptoms could include:

- Fatigue
- Headache
- Respiratory symptoms like chest tightness and shortness of breath
- Heart palpitations
- Joint or muscle pain
- Orthostatic intolerance
- Gastrointestinal issues like diarrhea or stomach pain
- Mood/psychological symptoms
- Insomnia
- Cognitive difficulties like “brain fog” or lack of concentration, difficulty processing information, and short term memory issues

At this time, management strategies and treatment of symptoms of long-COVID can be similar to overlapping symptoms of other chronic conditions including the fatigue and post-exertional malaise of Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS), the lightheadedness and racing heart of Orthostatic Intolerance (OI) or Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS), and the headaches and lingering cognitive symptoms of concussions or other brain injuries. It is important for the school nurse to be involved for the development of an Individualized Healthcare Plan (IHP).

Educational planning

A student experiencing long-COVID or other conditions as a result of the acute infection are eligible for protections and supports under federal disability laws that include the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504), and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The

disability may be new for the student or symptoms from a pre-existing disability could have worsened. The student may require new or different related services, specialized instruction, or reasonable modifications based on their current symptoms. The determinations for eligibility for IDEA or Section 504 will be made by the school team on an individual basis. The school nurse is an integral part of this evaluation process. The plan should be focused on **conserving energy and prioritizing demands in school**. Using a variety of school-based and educational considerations could support student success when returning to the classroom. A list of helpful suggestions to consider include:

Evaluation/Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Team meeting 504/IEP — School based PT/OT/SLP — Psychological evaluation — Educational evaluation — School nursing assessment
Scheduling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Gradual return to school — Blended learning (i.e. in-person, virtual, hybrid, etc.) — Flexibility in scheduling — Adjusted school days (i.e. shortened/alternative) — Adjusted time in arrival/dismissal/transitions between classes
Environment/Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Avoid busy or crowded transitions, entry/exit — Preferential classroom location to reduce demands transitioning to different settings — Use of quiet space, activities, or noise-cancelling headphones — Limited screen time — Opportunity to dim computer screen light/use audio — Adapted PE or reduced demands during physical activity — Elevator privileges — Allow use of rolling backpack/school bag — Allow access to water/salty snacks
Academic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Prioritizing academic demands — Excuse nonessential classwork — Strategies for cognitive difficulties — Increased time for exams or assignments (i.e. x1.5, x2.0) — Use of written instruction — Printed materials provided as able — Use of checklist, agenda book for organization — Reduced or limited amount of homework — Extra set of books — Use of assistive technology (i.e. keyboarding, calculator) — Copies of teacher notes prior to start of class/note taker in class
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Positive reinforcement, active listening, distraction techniques — Identification of an academic point person to coordinate and manage missed schoolwork — Preferred staff member (i.e. resource teacher, guidance counselor) for daily check-ins

Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Communication/continuing education with multidisciplinary team, healthcare providers, school nurse, school staff, etc. — Staff training of an Emergency Care Plan (ECP) and/or Emergency Evacuation Plan (EEP) as necessary
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It is important to develop a rapport with the student and understand that their needs and abilities may change from day to day or week to week. Communicate with the student, use active listening, and encourage management strategies to support their success returning to the classroom.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2021). Post-COVID conditions. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/long-term-effects.html>

Long COVID Kids. (2021). School awareness pack. <https://www.longcovidkids.org/schools>

U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR) and Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS). (2021). <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/ocr-factsheet-504-20210726.pdf>