

# Managing Post COVID-19 Condition Therapeutic Education Program

## What is 'Long COVID'?



# Welcome

April 2023

What is Long COVID?

## Module 2: Objectives

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

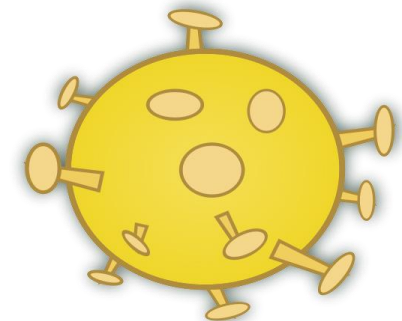
- Recognize what Long COVID is
- Recognize how Long COVID may be affecting your health and wellness
- Identify potential areas of the self management approach that the Post COVID-19 education program can help with in your recovery of health and wellness



# How COVID-19 impacts the body

# Long COVID

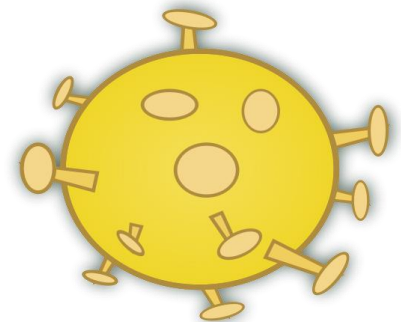
- New & emerging condition describing a range of symptoms which can persist for months after SARS CoV-2 infection
- “Umbrella” term
  - No internationally recognized definition
  - Can affect nearly every organ system
- Likelihood of developing Long COVID is not thought to be linked to severity of acute illness



# Long COVID

- Very wide range of symptoms
  - Absence of a diagnostic test to confirm condition
  - Some overlap with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome
  
- Prevalence
  - WHO: report 1:10 patients experience symptoms lasting beyond 12 weeks

When your symptoms last 4-12 weeks or more

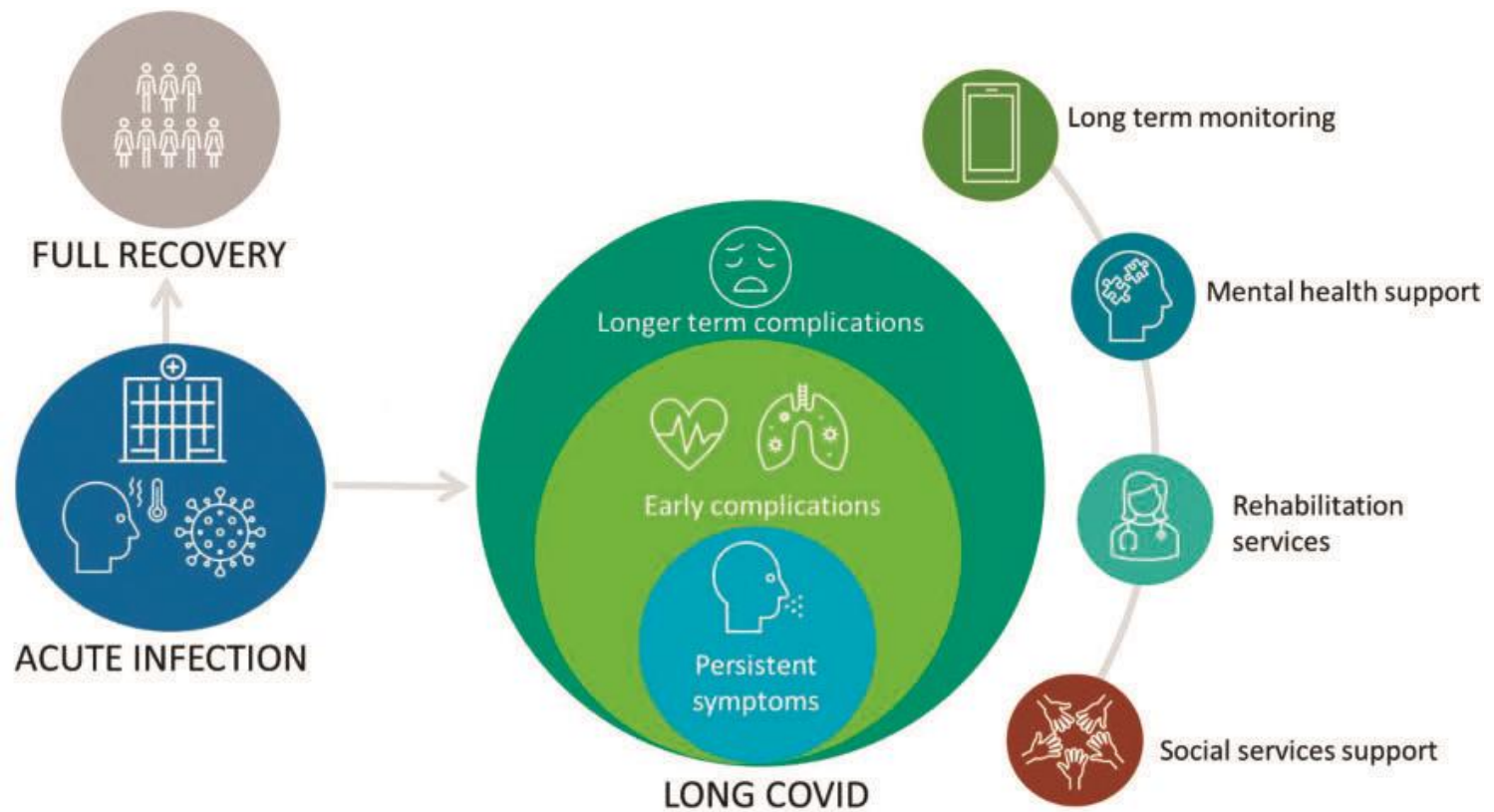


# WHO acknowledges Post COVID-19 Condition



**Oct 6 2021**

# Depiction of the clinical course of Long COVID

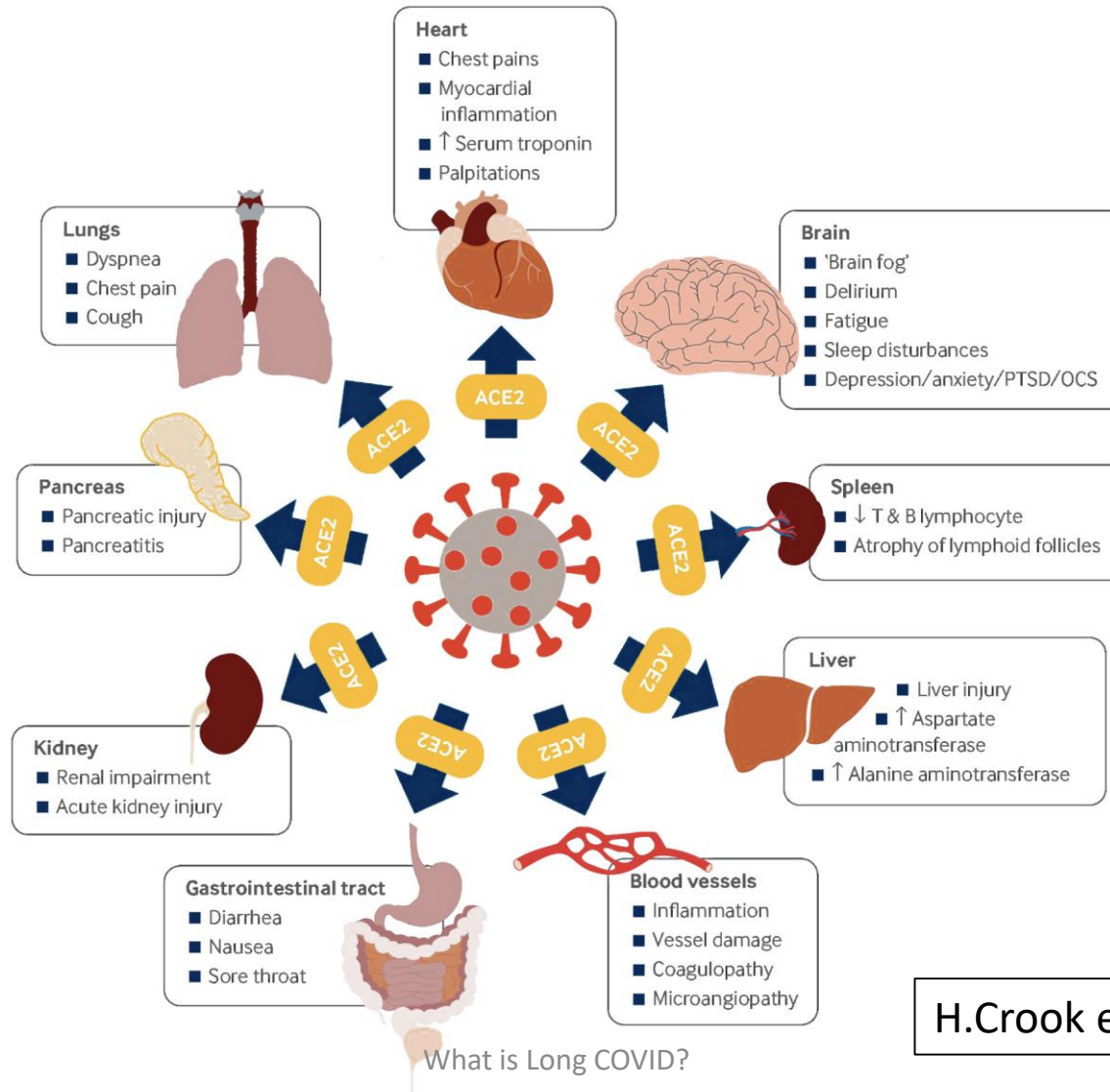




# Why am I still feeling the effects of COVID-19?

- Your immune system is overactive?
  - Possible immune responses against specific bodily regions
- Your normal cell function has been disturbed?
  - Residual damage to organs from acute infection & persistent inflammation
  - Higher frequency across major organ systems (lung, heart, CNS)
  - Unmasking of underlying comorbidities
- Persistent viral replication - virus is still active in your body?
  - Very rare cases reported

# Impact of Post COVID-19 condition on various organs



H.Crook et al, 2021



# Symptoms

## Long COVID – Many symptoms have been described:

- Fatigue Physical or Emotional or Cognitive
- Post Exertional Malaise (PEM)
- Shortness of breath / cough / chest pain
- Muscle and joint pain
- Headache
- Altered sense of smell and taste
- Cognitive impairment ('brain fog' with difficulties with memory loss and concentration)
- Anxiety & Depression
- Sleep disturbance
- Autonomic symptoms (unusual increase in HR or drop in blood pressure)
  - Orthostatic Hypotension
  - Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome'(POTS)

## Long COVID-less common symptoms:

- Ringing in the ears
- Hearing loss
- Diarrhea, nausea/vomiting, loss of appetite, abdominal pain, weight loss
- Visual disturbances
- Neuralgia (arms and legs)
- Tremors (shakiness of the limbs)
- Dizziness / Vertigo
- Skin rash, itching, red spots on hands and feet
- Significant hair loss
- Bladder changes
- Hot flushes / sweats

## Impact of long COVID on function

Whether hospitalized or not, persistent symptoms of Long COVID condition affect a person's functional abilities and quality of life.



## Impact of long COVID on function

- Reduced ability to perform daily activities (e.g. showering; managing finances; meal preparation)
- Reduced ability to care for dependents and family members
- Stigma: unsupported and abandoned by the medical field and community
- Difficulty returning to work and/or school
- Negative psychological and financial impacts







# Care and treatment

# Long COVID: Care and Treatment

- Treatment Options
  - Currently limited, due to insufficient understanding of the mechanisms that cause Long Covid
  - Importance of self-management
- Urgent referral for acute medical complication:
  - Severe oxygen desaturation on exercise, cardiac chest pain
- Understanding the symptoms
  - blood work, x-rays and other tests can rule out specific causes

# Long COVID: Care and Treatment

- Medications
- Mental Health Support
  - support for depression, anxiety, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Self management approach



# Concepts of self management

# Self management

The ability to deal with illness and its effects:

- Symptoms
- Physical consequences
- Social consequences
- Lifestyle consequences

To maintain satisfactory quality of life.

## Self management strategies

- Management for Post-COVID Condition must be tailored to the individual, depending on their symptoms, goals and preferences
- Education includes how to resume everyday activities conservatively and safely includes finding an appropriate pace, manageable for your energy levels
- Exertion should not be pushed to the point of fatigue or making symptoms worse.

# Self management strategies

“Stop. Rest. Pace”

Aim → achieve & maintain symptom stabilization

## What can I do?

- Listen closely, ask questions, share information, join in
- Reflect on what you are hearing
- Consider how you can use this information in your day to day life
- Use the resources and strategies we suggest to help manage your health



## How to find good health information

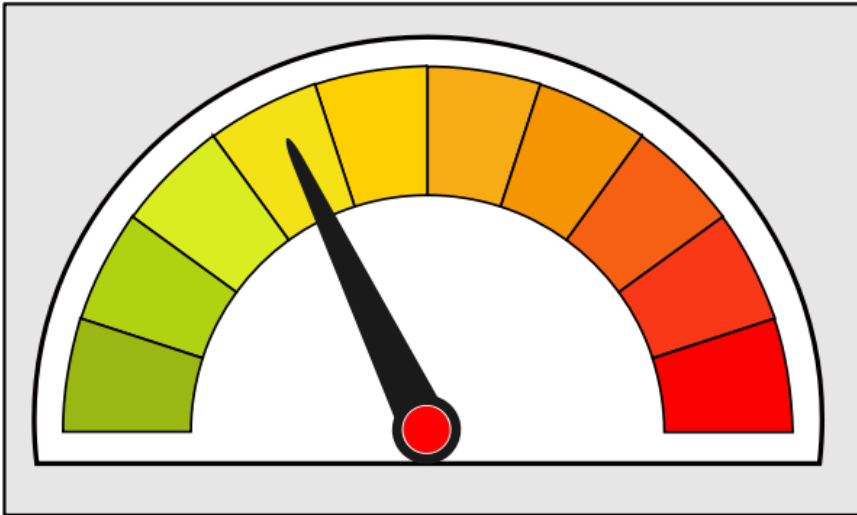
1. Look for trusted sources
2. Look for information that is relevant to you
3. Look for information that you can understand
4. Look out for warning signs
5. Be cautious if connecting with other people online
6. Check with your healthcare provider
7. Ask for help

*Australian Commission on Safety  
and Quality in Healthcare*

## Summary

- Long Covid is an individual experience and has a wide range of symptoms
- You may need different strategies at different times
- Education will help you understand what is happening, and interpret your own limits and recovery
- Learning how to self manage is a vital part of your recovery journey

## How much fuel is in your tank?



## Reflective activity:

1. What strategies have you used to conserve the fuel in your tank?
2. What do you want to use your fuel for?

