


COVID-19: Longer-term symptoms among Canadian adults

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Some people continue to experience symptoms after the acute phase of COVID-19 has ended. These longer-term symptoms are known as post COVID-19 condition, or long COVID.

Highlights

Second report: Spring 2023

First report: Fall 2022

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Data source

The Government of Canada developed the Canadian COVID-19 Antibody and Health Survey (CCAHS), to learn more about longer-term symptoms. The CCAHS covers the period from the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic until August 31, 2022. A random sample of Canadian adults were surveyed between April 1 and August 31, 2022. The questionnaire asked about new or continuing symptoms 3 or more months after a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19.

We've used this data to produce the reports highlighted here.

Highlights of the second report (Spring 2023)

The second report, Associations between Longer-term Symptoms after COVID-19 and Sociodemographics, Health Characteristics, Period of Infection, and Vaccination Status in Canadian Adults, January 2020 to August 2022, was published in the Spring of 2023. It looked at which groups of adults were more likely to report longer-term symptoms. It also explored risk and protective factors. Since this report was based on the latest CCAHS data, some estimates may differ from those published earlier.

The survey revealed that 17.2% of adults experienced longer-term symptoms after having had COVID-19 (confirmed or suspected), and that certain groups were more likely to report longer-term symptoms, including those who:

- were female
 - 22% of females reported longer-term symptoms, compared to 12.5% of males.
- had one or more pre-existing chronic conditions
 - 37.4% of adults with 4 or more pre-existing chronic conditions reported longer-term symptoms, compared to 12.8% of adults with no chronic conditions.
- lived with obesity
 - Over 27% of adults with mid to upper range obesity reported longer-term symptoms, compared to 16.2% of adults with normal weight (based on body mass index).
- lived with a disability
 - 28.3% of adults with a disability reported longer-term symptoms, compared to 16.3% of adults without a disability.
- had more severe initial COVID-19 symptoms
 - 44.7% of adults who were hospitalized for COVID-19 reported longer-term symptoms, compared to 2.3% of adults with no initial symptoms.

The survey also showed that longer-term symptoms were more common among adults who were:

- infected earlier in the pandemic
 - Over 26% of adults infected before July 2021 reported longer-term symptoms, compared to less than 15% of those infected between July 2021 and May 2022.
- unvaccinated
 - 25% of adults who weren't vaccinated before having COVID-19 reported longer-term symptoms, compared to 13.2% of those with 2 vaccine doses and 12.2% of those with 3 vaccine doses.

The results presented in this publication are consistent with other studies on longer-term symptoms after getting COVID-19.

Highlights of the first report (Fall 2022)

The first report, Frequency and impact of longer-term symptoms following COVID-19 in Canadian adults, was published in the Fall of 2022.

14.8%

of adults with a confirmed or suspected infection experienced longer-term COVID-19 symptoms

47.3%

of adults who experienced longer-term COVID-19 symptoms experienced symptoms for a year or longer

21.3%

of adults who experienced longer-term COVID-19 symptoms said that their symptoms often or always limited their daily activities

Longer-term symptoms were more common among females (18%) than males (11.6%), and among those who reported severe symptoms when they first got sick (36.4%).

Among adults with longer-term symptoms, the most common were:

- fatigue, tiredness or loss of energy (72.1%)
- coughing (39.3%)
- shortness of breath or difficulty breathing (38.5%)
- difficulty thinking or problem solving (32.9%)
- general weakness (30.9%)

Among adults with longer-term symptoms who were employed or attending school, approximately three-quarters (74.1%) missed some work or school due to their symptoms. On average, they missed 20 days.

These results are consistent with those from other surveys and international evidence.

Other initiatives about longer-term symptoms

The Government of Canada is trying to better understand and address the longer-term health impacts of COVID-19. In addition to the CCAHS, other efforts include investments in research through the:

- [Canadian Institutes of Health Research](#)
- [Task Force on Post COVID-19 condition](#)

For more information, please visit our [post COVID-19 condition](#) page.

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COVID-19 vaccination

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