**Post-COVID symptoms (long COVID) in children and young people – Going back to school**

If you have had COVID-19 (coronavirus) you might have symptoms that last for a few weeks or months. This is sometimes called post-COVID or long COVID. This information gives you some ideas of things you can do to make sure that you get back to your normal activities as easily and quickly as possible.

**Going back to school**

Having COVID-19 can affect your energy levels and ability to do physical and mental activities. This makes it important to have a plan to go back to school.

If you are finding it too difficult to go back to school, or have missed a lot of school, online learning or tutoring is a useful way to keep in touch with education. You can talk to your school about options for your education. They might be able to offer online options or teach you individually at school or in a support unit.

**Planning your return**

Planto go back to school gradually. Getting the pace of your return to school right is important.

Keep talking with your school and your healthcare professionals. You might need a parent or other adult to help communicate with your school about how you can stay as up to date as possible.

* Travelling can be tiring, so plan your journey when choosing your lessons. Getting a lift to school might be helpful to help you keep your energy for lessons.
* Choose a subject you enjoy or find easier. Start with 1 or 2 lessons a day until this feels OK, then add another lesson or 2. It is usually helpful to have consistent levels of activity across the week.
* If increasing by a whole lesson each day is too much, see if you can study in the library for a half a lesson until you stabilise at that level.
* It is worth prioritising going in for lessons where self-study is more difficult, even if that means going in at different times each day.
* If you find early mornings difficult, start with lessons that are late morning or early afternoon.
* If you feel more tired, avoid subjects where the classroom is at the top of a flight of stairs or at the far end of the building.
* Try not to carry too many books. Ask if your teacher can arrange for a ‘buddy’ to help carry books and be with you at break times. Keep extra books in a locker and only carry the ones you need for the next lesson or 2. Some schools will allow you to scan the chapter you are working on to a tablet, so that you do not need to carry books around at all.
* If you need to move rooms between lessons, ask if you can leave 5 minutes before the end of the lesson. Walking through empty corridors might feel less tiring and you will have time to stop and rest if needed. In some schools you will need a special pass to do this.

Slowly building up lessons is a sign you are increasing your mental and physical fitness.

Add PE towards the end of building up a full school timetable. Start by adding part of a lesson, such as the first 15 minutes, and gradually build up to a full lesson over a few weeks depending how you manage. It might be a good idea to do 1 PE or games lesson a week, rather than 2.

**Breaks**

Lunchtimes can be a good time to catch up with friends.

* Meet friends at the start of lunch or add a morning break before or after a lesson.
* Slowly increase the number of lunchtimes in the same way as you increase lessons.
* Meet your friends away from school for short periods of time and get used to spending time with them again.
* If you have school lunches, get to the canteen earlier to be first in the queue and so you do not have to stand for so long. You might be able to get a lunch pass.
* Having a cereal bar or piece of fruit and plenty of water to drink during the day can help keep your energy up.

Make time to relax and enjoy yourself too. This is a really important part of your recovery.

Read our information on socialising again and long COVID.

**Managing attention and concentration**

People often underestimate how much energy it takes to concentrate and pay attention.

* Choose a quiet, well-lit area for studying.
* If you do not have a quiet place to study because you live in a busy household, try a white noise app at a low volume. Your brain might find it easier to filter this out as it is a predictable noise.
* In class, try to sit near the front to see the whiteboard if you can, or work from handouts as this will also help your attention span.
* Start off with subjects that you like, feel motivated to do or find relatively easy, to help build up your stamina in this area.
* Do short bursts of more intense study, followed by breaks. There are lots of Pomodoro (time management) apps that can help plan your work and break times, and help you keep track of progress
* When you manage to build up a reasonable amount of time, tackle the more challenging subjects and keep the easier ones for when your attention is starting to fade.
* During your breaks, try to keep off screens.
* Standing up, having a stretch, and doing some breathing exercises, can help you feel more energised.

**Exams**

* Be realistic about what exams you should take if you have had a lot of time off school.
* Work out the number of subjects you think you can manage. The healthcare professionals can speak to your school about limiting your number of subjects.
* You might be eligible for exam concessions (such as rest breaks or taking exams in a separate room). Talk to your healthcare professionals (such as your GP) so they can talk to your school in plenty of time.
* Work out a revision or study timetable based on what you need to cover and the maximum length of time you can study. Start with a small amount and gradually build up in the same way as getting back to school.
* Learn exam management techniques so that you can perform at your best.
* Vary how and what you are revising.
* Write notes, draw diagrams, tables, or pictures, to help you remember information. Change your techniques and the topics so that you stay alert and interested.
* For longer studying periods, make sure you have a 5 to 10 minute break every 30 to 45 minutes.
* Ask for help if you are finding school or study difficult.

**Next steps**

If your symptoms continue for several months after having COVID-19, and you are concerned that you are not getting better, please speak to your GP.

For more help with long COVID symptoms, you can go to our other resources:

* eating well
* emotional wellbeing
* keeping active
* sleeping well
* socialising