

COVID & BEYOND

Post COVID: Health and
Behaviors



Presented by

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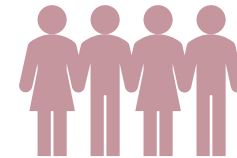
Objectives



To understand the effects of COVID on our short term and long term physical health



To learn about impacts of COVID on our behavioral health



To understand social behavioral changes and relationship implications due to COVID

COVID Health and Behavior Concerns

Physical and behavioral health challenges

Long COVID

Delayed preventive care

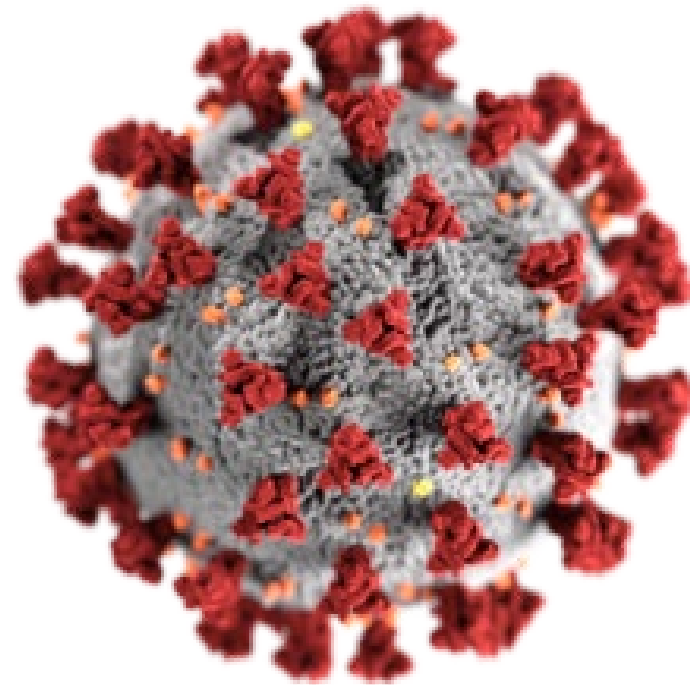
Behavior changes

Relationship changes

Vaccinations

Physical and Behavioral Health Challenges after COVID

- + Hair loss
- + Blood work changes
- + Fatigue
- + Brain fog
- + Vision changes
- + Sleep changes
- + Immune system changes
- + Depression and anxiety
- + Others
- + Long COVID



Post-COVID Case Study

- + Lisa had COVID in January 2022. She wasn't "too sick" according to her. After a few months she is noticed she was still feeling tired and not sleeping well. She was also experiencing some on-going hair loss. Friends told her to see her doctor to make sure it is not her thyroid.

Case Study cont...

- + Lisa saw her PCP. She told them she had COVID in January 2022
- + Her PCP drew her blood and conducted a thorough exam. Her thyroid labs were normal (TSH), but her liver enzymes and hemoglobin A1c were elevated. They also noted her hair loss and sleep disturbance.
- + They decided to monitor her labs in another 3 months to see if there are any changes
- + They asked her to monitor her blood sugar to make sure she is not having constant elevation of her glucose

Case study – 3 months later

- + Lisa came back for lab work and a follow up
- + Her hair loss was still a concern, but she heard from friends that for some of them it took 9-12 months to notice improvement
- + Her labs improved some and the PCP wanted to recheck them in another 3-6 months
- + Her PCP believed her symptoms are associated with her COVID infection, but they don't believe Lisa has Long COVID

Long COVID

- + In general, new or ongoing symptoms lasting for four weeks or more after the start of a COVID-19 infection
- + Symptoms can start days, weeks or months after an infection
- + Symptoms last different periods of time for different individuals
- + Can get worse with multiple COVID-19 infections



Long COVID

+ **General symptoms (*Not a Comprehensive List*)**

- Tiredness or fatigue that interferes with daily life
- Symptoms that get worse after physical or mental effort (also known as "[post-exertional malaise](#)")
- Fever

+ **Respiratory and heart symptoms**

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Cough
- Chest pain
- Fast-beating or pounding heart (also known as heart palpitations)

Long COVID

+ **Neurological symptoms**

- Difficulty thinking or concentrating (sometimes referred to as “brain fog”)
- Headache
- Sleep problems
- Dizziness when you stand up (lightheadedness)
- Pins-and-needles feelings
- Change in smell or taste
- Depression or anxiety

+ **Other symptoms**

- Joint or muscle pain
- Rash
- Changes in menstrual cycles



What can I do about Long COVID?

- + See your PCP
 - Know your history
 - Bring your list of concerns
 - Set goals with your healthcare providers
- + You may need to see a specialist(s)
- + Talk to your PCP and specialists about any tips to support your health and immune system
- + Seek EAP and behavioral health care (Optum- 855.HERE4TN and [here4TN.com](https://www.here4tn.com))
- + Growing resources and treatments to help individuals

Long COVID Case Study

- + Lisa is feeling better slowly but surely. Her lab are normalizing, her hair is growing back slowly after about 9-12 months. She is relieved, but she has a colleague that she is concerned about, Jerri
- + Jerri had COVID around the same time Lisa did, but she is worried about her on-going symptoms after COVID. She too has fatigue and "brain fog" she can't shake. Her heart often feels like it is racing which makes her feel short of breath. She sees Lisa feeling better and better, and Jerri feels like she is not recovering like Lisa is. Jerri feels down because of the physical, emotional and mental toll all of this is taking on her. She worries it is all in her head and concerned that a medical provider would not take her seriously. Lisa reassures Jerri that this is real and encourages her to see her PCP.

Long COVID Case Study cont...

- + Jerri sees her PCP and they assure her this is not all “in her head”
- + The PCP completes blood work, orders an EKG of the heart, and completes a thorough physical exam
- + Jerri’s EKG is abnormal and some of her blood work is too
- + The PCP refers Jerri to the cardiologist who completes more testing and recommends, with the PCP, that Jerri be referred to the Long COVID Clinic
- + They are able to start Jerri on some medication to stabilize her heart rate and they will continue to monitor her frequently
- + They also recommend Jerri connect with her Optum EAP for ongoing emotional and behavioral health support
- + They explain to Jerri that there are no cures for Long COVID yet and they don’t know how long it will last, but they are all committed to her treatment plan to help her regain some quality of life



Delayed Preventive Care

- + It's time to get caught up on the preventive visits
- + Start with a goal of 1-2 priorities for the coming months
 - Annual physical
 - Mammogram
 - Blood work
 - Colonoscopy
 - Routine vaccinations

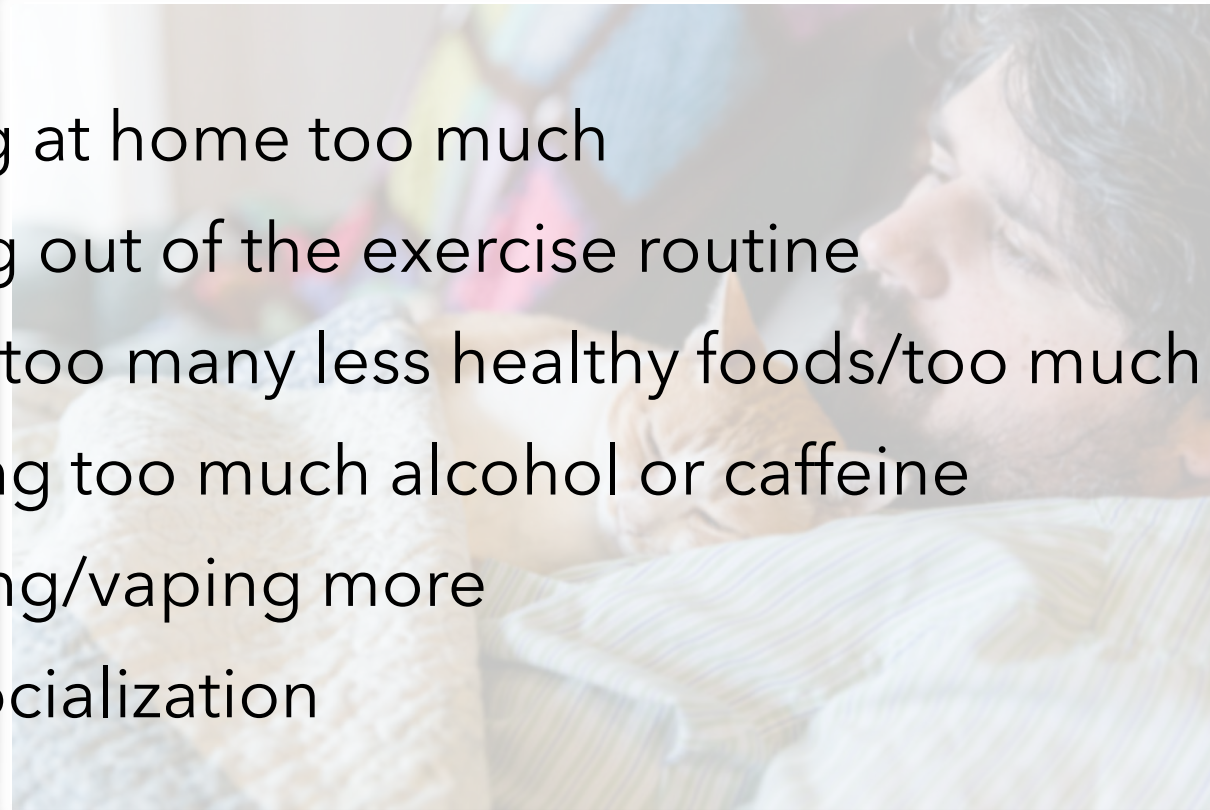
Vaccinations

- + COVID vaccines are available and safe
 - Primary series and boosters
- + If you have questions or concerns, reach out to your PCP or feel free to call us in the ParTNers Health & Wellness Center
- + Can assist with lessening severity of infection and reduced death and hospitalization
- + Other routine vaccines are important as well
 - Flu, shingles, pneumonia, etc...



Behavior Changes

- + Staying at home too much
- + Getting out of the exercise routine
- + Eating too many less healthy foods/too much take-out
- + Drinking too much alcohol or caffeine
- + Smoking/vaping more
- + Less socialization



Behavior Changes GOALS



+ **Start small and reasonable**

- "I'm going to schedule to see one friend this month"
- "I'm going to walk one day this week and two days next week"
- "I'm going to bring a salad for lunch one day per week"
- "I'm going to cut back to 2 cokes a day instead of 3"
- "I'm going to call the OPTUM EAP to talk about my drinking"
- "I'm going to call Active Health to get help to cut back on smoking"

Talk to a friend about your goals and progress (accountability)

Relationship Changes

- + Less socialization
- + Too much socialization/partying/going out
- + Distracted with phone/social media when with friends and family (or without)
- + Divorce/separation
- + Death of family or friends
- + Work stress/work relationships
- + **Reach out to OPTUM EAP for relationship support and coping resources**

Wrap Up

- + COVID has brought a lot of change to all of us
- + “Collective trauma”
- + The plan for recovery is different for everyone
- + Use your resources- friends, family, health care providers, Optum EAP, Active Health, colleagues, community
- + Be patient and set small goals for healing/change