



SAFER

Long COVID: What Employers Should Know

The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) created a [Household Pulse Survey](#) which found more than 40% of adults in the U.S. reported having COVID-19 in the past. Of that number, one in five American adults are still experiencing symptoms and have “Long COVID.” As reinfections continue and society is becoming conditioned to living alongside the virus, employers should be aware of Long COVID and how it can impact their workers.

What is Long COVID?

Long COVID is defined by people who have been infected with COVID-19 and are no longer testing positive but continue to experience long-term effects from their infection. People with Long COVID can experience a wide range of ongoing health problems that can last weeks, months or years. Some of the problems can include, but aren’t limited to:

- **Tiredness and fatigue**
- **Fever**
- **Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath**
- **Cough**
- **Chest pain**
- **Sleep problems**
- **Dizziness**
- **Difficulty thinking or concentrating**
- **Depression or anxiety**
- **Joint or muscle pain**

How can Long COVID affect your business?

Due to the symptoms people with Long COVID experience, it can affect their quality of life and ability to effectively work.

1. Neurological and mental health conditions

- a. Someone experiencing long term mental health issues from COVID can experience burnout, absenteeism, low morale and higher health care costs.

2. Cardiovascular conditions

- a. Workers with cardiovascular problems may struggle working in physically demanding conditions.
- b. Long COVID blood samples were taken and [data](#) showed those samples contained a category of “exhausted” T cells that can surge in the ongoing presence of pathogens. This suggests the bodies of people with Long COVID are actively fighting something.

3. Respiratory conditions

- a. Respiratory conditions can affect a worker’s oxygen levels. Therefore, someone experiencing these issues may not get the oxygen their muscles and organs need to function properly.
- b. Someone’s ability to stand, lift, reach, stretch and bend can be impacted.

4. Blood clots and vascular issues

- a. Someone with a blood clot or other vascular issues can cause work-related disabilities.
- b. The loss of economic output of people who are unable to work due to complications of blood clots is huge.

5. Musculoskeletal conditions

- a. Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) can include tendonitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, ruptured or herniated discs, sprains, etc.
- b. MSDs can affect a worker’s ability to carry out tasks especially if they’re doing repetitive movements.
- c. MSDs can cost employers billions of dollars each year in lost productivity, workers’ compensation, absenteeism, turnover and more.

NSC [data](#) has shown there’s a link between workplace safety and mental health. People who felt unsafe at work were **two to three times more likely** to experience symptoms of depression and anxiety disorders all or most days.

Recommendations for preventing Long COVID and supporting workers who are affected.

1. Promote COVID-19 vaccines and boosters

- a. NSC recommends employers require vaccinations for employees as it's the safest, most effective way to protect your workforce.
- b. Remove barriers to workers getting vaccinated by providing paid time off, offering onsite vaccination clinics, assisting with transportation costs, etc.

2. Create a psychologically safe culture

- a. Encourage workers to speak up without fear of repercussions.
- b. Create policies supporting a worker's ability to disclose incidents and be transparent with how they're feeling.

3. Promote total worker health and wellbeing

- a. Give workers access to paid time off (PTO) to get help and address impairment issues that may be present in their lives.
- b. Identify needs and wants when it comes to EAPs, wellness programs and other supportive measures.