

Benefits of Physical Therapy for Individuals With Long COVID



Early recognition and effective management of the potentially disabling effects of long COVID can lead to improved outcomes and quality of life. Physical therapists can help individuals with safe rehabilitation during long COVID recovery and empower them to self-manage lingering chronic symptoms.

Physical therapists ensure patient safety by:

- Screening for post-exertional malaise or symptom exacerbation before initiating activity.
- Assessing cardiopulmonary response to activity.
- Assessing autonomic response to activity.

Comprehensive and collaborative care includes screening for mental health concerns, cognitive impairment and brain fog, sleep disturbance, and gastrointestinal issues, and providing education on nutrition, sleep hygiene, relaxation techniques, and referral to the appropriate health care partner as needed.

Individualized treatment plans, tailored to each person's functional status and specific goals, will incorporate continuous monitoring of response to activity and exercise. Long COVID may be treated in conjunction with other patient-reported impairments and limitations as well as any preexisting conditions.

Sample Physical Therapist Treatment Plans

Impairment	Interventions
Fatigue	Tailored graded activity program; education on energy conservation and pacing; functional adaptation instruction as needed.
Post-exertional malaise or symptom exacerbation	Education on self-monitoring of symptoms, pacing, and physiologic recovery responses.
Dyspnea	Targeted breathing exercises; graded aerobic exercise; education on self-monitoring of symptoms; functional adaptation instruction as needed.
Dysautonomia	Supervised therapeutic exercises and activities in progressively challenging positions; referral to appropriate health care partner as needed.
Neuropathy	Balance and dual-task training; education on fall-prevention strategies; exercise; compensatory strategies if indicated.
Pain (joint, muscle, headache)	Education on pain science and self-care strategies; therapeutic techniques including manual treatments and modalities as needed.
Deconditioning	Progressive exercise program to include strength training and aerobic exercise.

[For referrals, visit the APTA Find a PT national directory of physical therapists.](#)

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