Post-COVID Conditions (PCC)

Your Guide to Lingering Pulmonary Symptoms

While COVID-19 infection often resolves within weeks, some people experience lingering respiratory issues. This handout explains how short-term effects of COVID-19 can lead to long-term breathlessness and explores various strategies for managing these symptoms in your patients.

Short-term symptoms and conditions

When patients catch COVID-19, they can experience different symptoms and conditions that impact their respiratory health, some of which are pulmonary and others that are extrapulmonary.

Pulmonary

- Pulmonary fibrosis
- Thromboembolic disease
- Acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS)

Extrapulmonary

- Forced decrease in physical activity
- Hypoxia
- Malnutrition
- Systemic inflammation
- Extrapulmonary immune-mediated damage

Long-term symptoms and conditions

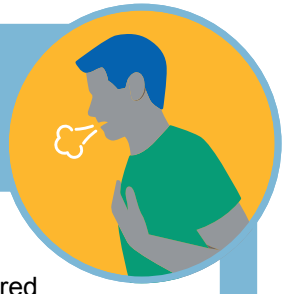
Months later, these short-term symptoms and conditions can cause lingering issues. These might include

- **Dysfunctional breathing:** assessed using a breathing pattern assessment tool (BPAT) or cardiopulmonary exercise testing (CPET)
- **Post-intensive care syndrome (PICS):** physical (e.g., reduced muscle mass and strength, reduced exercise tolerance) cognitive impairments, and mental health problems
- **Physical deconditioning and frailty**: reduced muscle mass and strength, reduced exercise tolerance and prefrailty or frailty

All these issues can lead your patients to feel breathlessness.

Breathlessness can be mitigated

with management strategies and rehab such as



Physiotherapist-led dyspnea management

- Assesses breathing and muscle weakness
- Teaches specific breathing exercises
- Tailors exercises for lung function and air intake

Post-ICU rehabilitation services

- Use the Post-ICU Presentation Screen (PICUPS) tool
- Physical and occupational therapy enhance strength

COVID-19 rehabilitation

that combines tailored exercise with breathing exercises to improve lung function and reduce breathlessness in patients with pulmonary post-COVID conditions

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Supported by a grant from Pfizer Inc.