VACCINATIVE | Vaccination information for Natives by Natives

Long COVID

Some people who get COVID-19 experience Long COVID - a condition that can include a range of health problems that may last weeks, months, or even years.

Fortunately, there are ways you can protect yourself and your community from Long COVID. This handout is designed to help you understand this condition and how to stay safe.

"When COVID hit, our community wasn't sure what to do or what would happen. When the vaccines came out, we were hopeful. Now, we feel so much better. COVID is an obstacle our community has had to overcome, but the vaccines make us feel more confident and protected."

– Sylvia Hollow Horn, Ogala Lakota Elder

What is Long COVID?

Most people with COVID-19 get better within a few days or weeks. But some people have symptoms that last weeks, months, or years. Long COVID occurs when someone has health problems that last more than four weeks after COVID infection.

Common Long COVID Symptoms

Symptoms of Long COVID may include:

- Fatigue
- Fever
- Headache
- Cough
- Chest pain
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Fast-beating or pounding heart
- Difficulty thinking or concentrating
- Sleep problems
- Depression or anxiety
- Change in smell or taste
- Diarrhea
- Joint or muscle pain

Some people only experience one of these symptoms, while others experience two or more. Symptoms vary from person to person and range from mild to severe.

"Booster shots are like getting a tune up for your immune system. They carry the latest instructions for fighting a particular illness. By getting boosted for COVID-19, for example, your body can see and fight the latest versions of the disease."

– Dr. Andrea N. Garcia, MD, MS, Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation, Physician

Those at Higher Risk for Long COVID

Some people are more likely to develop Long COVID, including individuals who:

- Did not get vaccinated and boosted against COVID-19
- Have other health conditions – like diabetes and high blood pressure
- Had a more severe COVID-19 infection

How to Protect Yourself

The best way to protect yourself from Long COVID is to avoid getting COVID-19. You can do this by being fully vaccinated and boosted. Getting vaccinated helps prevent COVID-19 infection, and if you happen to get sick, it makes it less likely that you will have a serious infection.

You can also protect yourself from Long COVID by getting treatment if you test positive. These treatments can prevent severe illness. Call your doctor as soon as you test positive to learn what treatments are appropriate for you.

"Long COVID can be prevented. Here at Snow Creek Clinic, we talk to patients concerned about Long COVID and encourage them to get vaccinated and boosted to protect themselves and the community from COVID-19 and any long-term effects."

– Dr. Allison Kelliher, MD, Koyukon Athabascan, Inuipiaq, and Irish

Where to Get Vaccinated

To get vaccinated contact your local Tribal clinic, IHS facility, or visit a local pharmacy or clinic.

VacciNative

This handout was developed by VacciNative – a project dedicated to creating accurate vaccine information for Native people by Native people. We do this by gathering info from trusted Elders, Native health professionals, and other experts.

All of our materials are reviewed by the VacciNative Alliance, a collaboration of staff from Tribal Epidemiology Centers across the nation.

Additional Information

For additional information, check out www.IndianCountryECHO.org/VacciNative. For questions, contact us at VacciNative@npaihb.org.

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