HOW COVID-19 CAN AFFECT PEOPLE WITH CHRONIC CONDITIONS

COVID-19 can affect health beyond the initial illness. For people with chronic conditions, research has linked infection to worsening symptoms, more difficult recovery and additional health risks. Not everyone will experience these complications, but the findings underscore the importance of timely treatment.

1 COVID-19's lasting effects



Cardiovascular Health: A 2020 study of people 50 years old and older, conducted before vaccines were available, found that the risk of heart attack, stroke and death roughly doubled with any type of COVID-19 infection. The risk was highest among those hospitalized with COVID-19.[1]

2 When you already have a chronic condition

Respiratory / Airway Disease:
Research has linked COVID-19 to lasting effects on recovery and quality of life. Among people hospitalized with COVID-19, those with preexisting respiratory or airway diseases, such as asthma and COPD, reported more persistent symptoms, greater difficulty with physical activity and lower health-related quality of life for up to a year after discharge.[2] Another study found that only 1 in 5 people with COPD hospitalized following COVID-19 felt fully recovered a year after discharge, compared with 1 in 3 people without a respiratory or airway disease.[3]

Parkinson's disease:
One study found that among people with Parkinson's disease, COVID-19 was associated with approximately 58% higher risk of death and major cardiovascular events as well as more falls, fatigue, and breathlessness for up to 3.5 years post-infection, compared with people with Parkinson's who had no recorded positive COVID-19 test.[4]

Chronic liver disease:
A study of people with chronic liver disease found that those who had COVID-19 early in the pandemic had higher rates of hospitalization and death over the following year than a matched group with chronic liver disease who did not have COVID-19.[5]

3 Why timely treatment matters

Many people with chronic conditions face a greater risk of severe illness from COVID-19. **Antiviral treatments, medicines that stop the virus from multiplying, can reduce the risk of hospitalization and death in eligible patients.** They must be started promptly, within five to seven days after symptoms begin, depending on the treatment.[6]

Delays related to cost, coverage, awareness, or access can make it harder for eligible patients to begin treatment on time. **Since COVID-19 continues to pose risks for people with chronic conditions, ensuring timely and affordable access to antiviral treatment remains essential.**

If you have a chronic condition, talk with your doctor now about a plan for testing and treatment if you get sick.

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