



Civil Aviation Department
Hong Kong

Health Promotion

Post COVID-19 and fitness to fly

Post COVID-19 condition (long Covid) occurs in individuals with a history of probable or confirmed SARS CoV-2 infection, usually 3 months from the onset of COVID-19 with symptoms and that last for at least 2 months and cannot be explained by an alternative diagnosis.

Centre of Disease Control in US mentioned that some groups of people may be affected more by post-COVID conditions. Some people might be risker from getting into post-COVID conditions:

- People who have experienced more severe COVID-19 illness, especially those who were hospitalized or underwent intensive care,
- People who had underlying health conditions prior to COVID-19,
- People who did not get a COVID-19 vaccine,
- People who experience multisystem inflammatory syndrome (MIS) during or after COVID-19 illness, or
- People affected by health inequities including people from racial or ethnic minorities and people with disabilities.

According to the information from the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately 10-20% of people may continue to experience mid- and long-term effects of COVID-19, including fatigue, getting respiratory and neurological symptoms. Although it is still unclear how long the symptoms may last, current research suggests that patients can improve with time.

Centre of Disease Control in US found out that people who experience post-COVID conditions commonly report the following symptoms which may affect people's daily activities. Symptoms may be new onset following initial recovery from an acute COVID-19 episode or persist from the initial illness. Symptoms may also fluctuate or relapse over time.

General symptoms

- Tiredness or fatigue that interferes daily life
- Symptoms that get worse after physical or mental effort (also known as "post-exertional malaise")
- Fever

Respiratory and heart symptoms

- Difficulty in breathing or shortness of breath
- Cough
- Chest pain
- Continuous fast heartbeats (also known as heart palpitations)

Neurological symptoms

- Difficulty in thinking or concentrating (sometimes referred to as “brain fog”)
- Headache
- Sleeping problems
- Dizziness when standing up (lightheadedness)
- Feeling pins-and-needles
- Abnormal in gustation or olfaction
- Depression or anxiety

Digestive symptoms

- Diarrhea
- Stomach pain

Other symptoms

- Joint or muscle pain
- Getting rash
- Irregular menstrual cycles

Researchers in Polytechnics University in HK has tracked the health and physical performance of around 120 Covid patients who were infected since October 2020, and found that long Covid appeared in patients across all age groups. The symptoms range from brain fog/ tiredness/ fatigue to both physical and mental fatigue. It was noted that more than 40% of Covid-19 patients were found to be unable recovering to their original physical strength according to a Hong Kong Polytechnic University research team.

You may discuss with your family doctor if you recognize that you are suffering from these symptoms. Furthermore, you should seek advice from your AME if you find the symptoms affecting your fitness to fly.