

Post-Covid-19 Program Self-Care Strategies

Caring for the whole person (body, mind, and soul) is important throughout recovery from post-acute sequelae of Covid-19 (PASC) infection. We recommend following these self-care strategies in addition to any medical treatments prescribed by your providers.

The 4 Ps: Planning, Pacing, Prioritizing, and Positioning

When you have limited energy, prioritize tasks and pace yourself when engaging in work and family life.

Planning: Plan out your daily routine to allow completion of essential activities during those times that you have the most energy.

Pacing: Allow sufficient time to complete activities and incorporate frequent rest. Overexerting yourself can make you feel worse.

Prioritizing: Only engage in tasks that are pleasurable or necessary for work/family life when you have limited energy.

Positioning: Assess current methods for performing tasks that may be causing you more energy than needed and modify actions to help limit the amount of energy you exert.

Thinking and Memory

There is no one size fits all approach when it comes to brain health, and lifestyle changes look different for everyone. The following strategies have been shown to help with brain health over time:

- Engaging in aerobic exercise for 30 minutes a day, at least five days a week (at the discretion of your doctor)
- Walking for at least 30 minutes a day, three days per week (has been shown to reduce memory decline in older adults)
- Eating a healthy diet that includes fruits, vegetables, nuts, beans, and whole grains
- Avoiding alcohol consumption and drug use
- Participating in social activities
- Pursuing mentally stimulating activities (e.g., mindfulness, listening to music, playing games, or completing crossword puzzles)
- Speaking with a friend (one of the most cognitively demanding activities you can do)
- Reducing stress by eliminating tasks that are not necessary
- Prioritizing your emotional health
- Developing healthy coping strategies for depression and anxiety



Emotional Health

Taking care of your emotional health is foundational to self-care. You may be experiencing anxiety, depression, sadness, grief, or other emotions that you may not have experienced before or felt as intensely. While self-care strategies can be helpful, it is important to reach out to a professional as needed to assess your mental health.

- **Social Connections**

Connecting with others and having a support system are key to maintaining your mental health. Addressing loneliness is important for improving your mood and can help lower your risk for depression. Set aside time to engage with others as your energy levels allow. This can include reaching out through social media or by phone.

- **Expressing Gratitude**

Taking time out of your day to express things that went well or that you are grateful for can have a positive impact on your mood. Think about what makes you grateful and express your appreciation. This can be accomplished through conversation, by writing it down in a journal, or even using a mobile app. When you express gratitude, your brain releases dopamine, which is associated with sensations of pleasure, and serotonin, which plays an important role in regulating your mood. Together, these two neurotransmitters can help boost your mood.

- **Relaxation Exercises**

Taking time out of your day to practice relaxation techniques can help reduce stress and anxiety. Common strategies include meditation, guided breathing exercises, progressive muscle relaxation, journaling, and visualization. Many relaxation techniques and strategies are available on the internet and through mobile apps, such as Breathe2Relax, Calm, Guided Meditations, Happify, Headspace, MindShift, and MoodTools.

For Help in a Crisis

People who are dealing with the effects of a chronic illness may have thoughts of death, dying, or suicide. If you feel you or someone you know may harm themselves or someone else, seek help immediately by visiting the nearest emergency room or calling 9-1-1.

The following lifelines are available by phone 24 hours a day, seven days a week:

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233

Disaster Distress Helpline for Depression and Anxiety Related to COVID-19: 1-800-985-5990

Integral Care for Residents of Travis County: 1-512-472-4357

Bluebonnet Trails Community Services for Residents of Bastrop, Burnet, Caldwell, Fayette, Gonzales, Guadalupe, Lee, and Williamson Counties: 1-800-841-1255

Adapted From:

Acers: Post Covid-19 Patients Information Packet. NHS Homerton University Hospital.

Budson, A. (2021). What is Covid-19 Brain Fog and How Can You Clear it. *Harvard Health Blog*.

Chowdhury, M. (2021). The Neuroscience of Gratitude and How it Affects Anxiety and Grief.

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