

Health sector update: Long COVID Programme

Update #1

28 April 2022

Kia ora koutou,

Welcome to the first sector update on the long COVID programme. We plan to provide a series of updates as information and guidance develops on long COVID. They will highlight relevant information as it is released and respond to specific questions and concerns raised.

In this update:

- The Ministry of Health's long COVID programme summary
- Updated [long COVID webpage](#)
- [Recording and coding](#) long COVID
- Long COVID: [funding for primary care](#)
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- Did you or someone you know have COVID-19 prior to December 2021? Call for research [survey](#) participants

The Ministry of Health's long COVID programme

The Ministry of Health has established a long COVID programme with the goal of disseminating emerging models of care, clinical practice, patient self-management and digital enablement to support patients with long COVID-19 in a New Zealand context.

COVID-19 has disproportionately affected certain populations and exacerbated inequities, and the burden of long COVID is likely to continue this trend. In New Zealand, Māori and Pacific people make up a high proportion of COVID-19 cases, so it is possible that long COVID is a condition that will burden these groups. Within the work programme, four workstreams are underway to support the development of the long COVID rehabilitation and service delivery guidance within an Aotearoa New Zealand context:

1. Development of a **service development toolkit** (also known as a change package), including monitoring health providers with existing specific services for long COVID
2. Establishing an **expert advisory group** to provide guidance and input into the long COVID rehabilitation guideline, with broad representation from Māori, Pacific peoples, researchers, clinicians, service providers and people with lived experience.
3. Monitoring emerging evidence to inform **clinical pathways** to identify and manage long COVID
4. **Ongoing research to identify gaps** that are particular to Aotearoa New Zealand and options for how they might be addressed.

Long COVID webpage updated

The Ministry of Health website and the [long COVID webpage](#) will be continually updated as the evidence emerges. On this page:

- [Long-term health impacts of COVID-19](#)
- [Long COVID definitions](#)
- [Symptoms of long COVID](#)
- [Who gets long COVID](#)
- [Burden of long COVID](#)
- [Possible causes of long COVID](#)
- [Treatment, management and support options](#)
- [Tracking symptoms](#)
- [Impact of vaccination on long COVID](#)
- [What the Ministry of Health is doing to manage the long-term effects of COVID](#)

Recording and coding long COVID

This information is for GPs, hospital clinicians and their software industry partners. It should be used to record details of COVID-19 in the affected patient's health record.

Coding is now available for post-acute COVID-19 and for long COVID.

You should use the SNOMED CT codes in the table below for case classification, following the [case definition and testing guidance for COVID-19](#). These SNOMED concepts and terms are included in the [SNOMED CT New Zealand Edition](#). If your software does not yet support SNOMED, you will have to use the equivalent Z codes, PMS codes or ICD-10-AM codes.

Concept	SNOMED CT code	Z code	Medtech code	Profile code	ICD-10-AM
Confirmed COVID-19	840539006		@MT0.02	COVID19-1	U07.1
Probable COVID-19	50881000210106		@MT0.04		U07.2
Under investigation COVID-19	840544004		@MT0.03	COVID19-2	Z03.8
Not a case	688232241000119100				
Post-acute COVID-19 4-12 weeks	1119303003	Z2201			
Long COVID-19 > 12 weeks	1119304009	Z2202			

Read more here: [Recording COVID-19 | Ministry of Health NZ](#)

Funding for Primary Care

Most people who get COVID-19 recover fully, but some may go on to develop longer term symptoms or "long COVID". There is currently no additional COVID funding for investigation and treatment of long COVID. It will be funded in the same way as other medical conditions and emergencies.

Once the acute phase of the COVID-19 infection is over, any longer-term symptoms which continue or develop beyond six weeks from diagnosis should be managed in the same way as other long-term conditions.

Normal co-payments for general practice appointments will apply, as well as part charges for emergency ambulance callouts, and prescription co-payments at community pharmacies. Specialist level treatment will be funded by DHBs, or self-funded if accessed privately.

Read more here: [Long COVID: Funding for primary care | Ministry of Health NZ](#)

Long COVID Expert Advisory Group

The Ministry is currently establishing the Expert Advisory Group for long COVID to assess the evidence on long COVID and apply it to the Aotearoa New Zealand context, to help inform recommendations for clinical practice and guidelines. The group will provide advice and guidance to the programme, with broad representation from Māori, Pacifica, researchers, consumers, clinicians, and service providers. The group will meet in May 2022.

Goodfellow Unit Webinar: Long COVID

On the 7th April 2022, Dr Martin Chadwick presented the Ministry of Health's approach to long COVID as part of a webinar hosted by the Goodfellow Unit. This webinar focused on what is known at the early post-omicron stage and provide practical clinical advice.

You can find a recording of the webinar at <https://www.goodfellowunit.org/events/long-covid>

- [Presentation on the Ministry of Health's approach to long COVID \(7 April 2022\) pdf](#)
- [Presentation on the Ministry of Health's approach to long COVID \(7 April 2022\) ppt](#)

Did you or someone you know have COVID-19 prior to December 2021?

Call for research survey participants

The Ministry is funding research on the Impacts of COVID-19 in Aotearoa study, run by Victoria University of Wellington. For those who had COVID-19 prior to December 2021, there is an opportunity to take part in the Impacts of COVID-19 in Aotearoa study run by Victoria University of Wellington looking at the importance of appropriate health services for people with COVID.

[Preliminary survey](#) results show more support is needed for people with COVID-19. Survey research is continuing until the end of April 2022. To add to information about people's experience, qualitative data will also be collected through interviews with up to 75 participants.

"We hope more people will participate. The more people who complete the surveys, the more information we can provide to the Ministry of Health to help get people the care they need," Dr Jeffreys says.

The surveys are open to anyone aged 16 or over who had COVID-19 (or were a probable case) before 1 December 2021. People who are eligible can go to <https://covid.aotearoa.com> to take part. Alternatively, they can call 0800 800 581 or email covid.aotearoa@vuw.ac.nz