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SUPPORTING PATIENTS WITH LONG-COVID What to Look for and How to Treat Lingering COVID-19 Symptoms



Many people who have been infected with SARS-Cov-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, are still dealing with symptoms—something known as long-COVID. According to recent data, nearly one in five people who had COVID-19 still experience some symptoms.

Long-COVID can occur after being infected with the virus. It can be identified as early as four weeks from initial infection. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines long-COVID as occurring “usually three months from the onset of COVID-19 with symptoms that last for at least two months and cannot be explained by an alternative diagnosis.” Some symptoms may dissipate; sometimes they don’t.

Children tend to be less affected by long-COVID compared to adults. It’s difficult to say if symptoms resolve sooner than in adults, explained Rabia Agha, MD, Director of the Division of Pediatric Infectious Diseases at Maimonides Children’s Hospital in Brooklyn.

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FEATURED STORIES

Even though research on long-COVID is sparse, studies on long-COVID with children are even more scarce. Symptoms tend to be the same for both populations, she said.

This condition can be frustrating to patients and health care providers alike—namely because we know so little about it.

There is no single diagnostic test for long-COVID. That's what makes diagnosing—and treating it—such a challenge.

Spotting Long-COVID

Though other studies, including federal data, say that women may be at a greater risk for long-COVID, recent research in *Scientific Reports* did not find a correlation between gender, age, race, and preexisting conditions. However being clinically obese puts the patient at a higher risk for long-COVID.

People who experienced headaches, sore throat, and hair loss during initial infection were more likely to have lingering symptoms, the researchers found.

Symptoms of Long-COVID

The most common symptoms of long-COVID, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), include:

- ◆ Tiredness or fatigue
- ◆ Exacerbation of symptoms after physical or mental effort (or “post-exertional malaise”)
- ◆ Fever
- ◆ Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- ◆ Cough
- ◆ Chest pain
- ◆ Fast-beating or pounding heart
- ◆ Difficulty thinking or concentrating (“brain fog”)
- ◆ Headache
- ◆ Sleep problems
- ◆ Dizziness when you stand up
- ◆ Pins-and-needles feelings
- ◆ Change in smell or taste
- ◆ Depression or anxiety
- ◆ Diarrhea
- ◆ Stomach pain

Symptoms that are less common: Joint or muscle pain, rashes, changes in menstrual cycles, hair loss, ejaculation difficulty, insomnia, blurry vision, and loss of appetite.

Treating Long-COVID

Effectively treating long-COVID has been a “work in progress,” according to Barbara Alvarez, MD, who specializes in infectious diseases and internal medicine. She sees patients at the Maimonides post-COVID clinic.

There's no specific treatment, so doctors have to identify the conditions. They promote vaccination, because some studies show unvaccinated people can be at a higher risk of developing post-COVID conditions compared to vaccinated people who had breakthrough infections. Dr. Alvarez also encourages self-care including diet and physical activity, as well as mindfulness.

“It is not unusual to encounter patients who continue to exhibit symptoms despite evaluation and appropriate treatment. When this happens, we try to find different modalities to focus on improving symptoms,” Alvarez said.

Dr. Alvarez said the clinic is conducting research to evaluate patients with long-COVID.

Maimonides Health has comprehensive specialists available to treat wide-ranging symptoms of long-COVID. For more information, visit a post-COVID care center near you.

Dr. Sergey Motov Reaches Breakthrough in Ketamine Nebulization Studies



Patients experiencing pain have many treatment options at their disposal. Doctors prescribe opioids to control both acute and chronic pain, but in the wake of the opioid epidemic and the increasing rates of drug dependency, doctors are looking for safer choices that lower the risk of addiction without reducing pain relief effectiveness.

Avoiding addictive medications is many doctors' preference, but depending on a patient's severity of pain, other medications may not have the desired effect. An alternative treatment option is ketamine, and Maimonides' own Sergey Motov, MD has been conducting research on the therapeutic applications of nebulized ketamine, specifically.

Ketamine Nebulization Is a Promising Therapy for Acute and Chronic Pain

Intravenous ketamine has been used as a pain treatment and for anesthesia management for decades, but Dr. Motov's research shows that nebulized ketamine works a little differently. "Administration of nebulized ketamine has the potential to offer rapid, effective, titratable, and non-invasive analgesia to patients in pain in various clinical settings when ketamine can be used," Dr. Motov shared.

Eligible patients may even be able to manage their own pain using a breath-actuated nebulization.

This breakthrough research has the power to transform pain management for many different patients. "Ketamine is uniquely positioned to be effective for a variety of acute, acute on chronic, and chronic painful syndromes, including cancer-related pain," Dr. Motov explained. "However, I see the greatest value of its use in patients with acute traumatic/non-traumatic pain, abdominal pain, back pain, and pain due to vaso-occlusive crisis in sickle cell patients in the ED and in pre-hospital settings."

Preliminary Study Data Hints at Additional Benefits

Ketamine nebulization might also render fewer side effects than intravenous administration. Current research doesn't directly compare each therapeutic use, but "indirect comparison revealed more favorable adverse effects," Dr. Motov said, "and the overall tolerability of nebulized ketamine seemed better based on our data analysis."

His research is changing the way clinicians treat patients experiencing pain while also reducing the necessary dose for effective pain management. "The lowest dose is just as effective as the highest for short-term pain relief," he said. "In my opinion, this will add an additional layer of comfort for the physicians contemplating administration of ketamine."

The Future of Nebulized Ketamine

Emergency medicine physicians in Texas are already applying Dr. Motov's findings to their own patients. They conducted their own study expanding the application of this cutting edge treatment. He's "thrilled to know they've been using nebulized ketamine in pre-hospital settings with great success and impressive safety."

Dr. Motov isn't done researching ketamine nebulization just yet. His team has already launched a "prospective randomized clinical trial comparing analgesic efficacy and safety of nebulized ketamine to intravenous ketamine in managing acute pain in adult ED patients."

These findings may change the way doctors administer ketamine all around the world.

To hear more about Dr. Motov and his research on pain management, check out his interview on MaimoMedTalk: <https://maimo.org/compassionate-pain-management-how-maimonides-is-navigating-the-opioid-crisis/>

Two Maimonides Health Hospitals Recognized for Organ Donation Awareness

Organ, eye, and tissue donation saves lives every single day, but the demand far outweighs the number of donations. In the United States, there are over 100,000 people on the transplant list, but there are only enough organ donations for around 40,000 transplant surgeries each year. As a result, 17 people die everyday waiting for a transplant.

Maimonides Health is proud to have two nationally recognized hospitals championing organ, eye, and tissue donation awareness. The Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) Division of Transplantation awarded Maimonides Midwood Community Hospital (MMCH) with a Bronze distinction, while Maimonides Medical Center earned Platinum status, the highest level of recognition.

Achieving These Awards Is Hard Work

Reaching bronze and platinum status through HRSA's transplant awareness campaign isn't easy. There's a lot of work that goes on behind the scenes to accomplish this goal. Participating facilities fill out a scorecard to earn points toward bronze, silver, gold, or platinum recognition.

Organizations that participate in the campaign earn points from three categories:

- ◆ Hospital Campaign Donor Registration
- ◆ Hospital Communications and Events
- ◆ Community Engagement and Events

Dr. Richard Savel's leadership and vision are what landed Maimonides these distinctions. His roles as the Vice Chair for Inpatient Operations for the Department of Surgery and Director of Adult Critical Care Services put him in a unique position to champion organ transplant and donation awareness.

"I see critical care patients who need transplants on a regular basis," Dr. Savel explained, "so I know how important this work is. We're making a difference in these patients' lives by promoting organ donation awareness and registering people to become organ donors."



Maimonides Community Partner Congratulates Our Platinum Status

Maimonides achievement hasn't gone unnoticed. Leonard Achan, RN, MA, ANP, President & CEO of LiveOnNY, congratulated both hospitals for their "commitment and advocacy work to increase awareness for organ, eye, and tissue donation in the communities they serve." There's no doubt these efforts are giving New Yorkers a second chance at life through increased organ donor enrollment and awareness.



MAIMONIDES HEALTH HOSTED

16th Annual National Cancer Survivors Day at Maimonides Park

The event included food, live music by the Mazel Tov Cocktail Band (featuring Maimonides' oncologists), and speeches from Kenneth E. Gibbs, President & CEO, Maimonides Health; Kevin Becker, MD, Chief, Division of Hematology Medical Oncology; and Patrick Borgen, MD, Chair, Department of Surgery. Free shuttle bus service was provided from the cancer center, and families from across the City were invited to attend.



As part of the special event's programming, the following survivors and patients were honored as 2022 Cancer Survivors Awardees:

- ◆ Makhi Williams
- ◆ Lisette Caesar
- ◆ Christine Rodriguez
- ◆ Areita Guy

"To be a survivor, one definition states that the person must cope well with the difficulties in their life. That is exactly what Makhi did at age 14 when he was diagnosed with a brain tumor," said Shari Feinberg, Pediatric Oncology Nurse Practitioner at Maimonides. "Despite having to be taken out of school and isolated from

his peers even before the COVID-19 pandemic, Makhi smiled all the way through his treatment, consisting of chemotherapy and radiation therapy, through any obstacles thrown his way. He developed a close bond with the staff in the department that still holds true to this day and often jokes with the providers when he comes to the clinic. He embodies the spirit of our practice, and this is why he was chosen as an honored survivor."

"It was an honor and a privilege to be able to host and perform at this year's Cancer Survivor's Day," said Dr. Patrick Borgen, Chair, Surgery and Director of the Breast Cancer Program at Maimonides. "Watching these survivors and their families smile, laugh, and enjoy life is what you hope for when first diagnosing a patient. We strive every day to ensure that our cancer survivors can celebrate today and tomorrow by reinforcing our commitment to providing top-notch medical care that save lives."

Maimonides Cancer Center is recognized for its treatment excellence and is the first fully accredited cancer center in Brooklyn. The comprehensive center is home to New York's top oncologists, with a fully accredited Breast Center, Breast Imaging Center of Excellence, and Prostate Center offering the latest minimally invasive approaches such as HIFU. Maimonides patients receive personalized treatment plans from experts who use the most innovative treatment therapies and provide access to clinical trials that advance cancer research and outcomes.



Midwood Native to Lead Maimonides Midwood Cardiology Team

Chaim Gitelis, DO, has been named Director of Clinical Cardiology at Maimonides Midwood Community Hospital (MMCH).

Dr. Gitelis will see patients admitted to MMCH, and also see patients on an outpatient basis.

MMCH already has world-class equipment in-house, and offers the latest advancements in preventative care and procedures.

“We meet monthly to discuss the latest technology and procedure to ensure we’re always ahead of the curve,” Dr. Gitelis explained.

Under his direction, and in collaboration with the Maimonides Medical Center Department of Cardiology, more advancements are on the way for MMCH.

Dr. Gitelis is working to establish a Center of Cardiac Excellence at MMCH. He is facilitating a system for complete cardiac care, including echocardiography, cardiac stress testing, and forming an interventional

cardiac suite. He’s hoping a cardiac stress lab and will be complete early next year. Once established, MMCH will be the first hospital in Midwood to have those services.

Expanding World-Class Cardiac Care

Maimonides Health has been recognized among the top hospitals in the country for heart attack survival.

“Maimonides has a well-regarded national reputation as one of the top hospitals in the country for cardiac care,” Dr. Gitelis said. “The well-oiled machine of cardiologists works cohesively with one goal in mind, which is positive outcomes for patients.”

One thing that makes that happen is doctors working together. They meet frequently to review cases and share information. “We bounce things off each other all the time,” Dr. Gitelis said.

Collaborating has helped drive positive outcomes for patients while positioning Maimonides as a leader in cardiac care across the nation.

Complete care is as important as collaborative care. Providing care from diagnosis to discharge, and then following up with patients, is what drives those positive outcomes. This involves treating patients individually—something that Dr. Gitelis says has been key to his success.

“It starts by listening to the patient and family,” Dr. Gitelis said. “As a cardiologist who still practices internal medicine, I am involved with the whole patient.” That means looking at all aspects of a patient’s health, and

collaborating with other specialists to treat patients.

“The same is true for patients who come to the outpatient office,” Dr. Gitelis added. “We don’t limit our services to cardiology.”

About Dr. Gitelis

Dr. Gitelis, who was born and raised in Midwood, obtained his medical degree at New York College of Osteopathic Medicine. He completed his Internal Medicine Residency and Cardiology Fellowship at Maimonides.

Dr. Gitelis is board certified in internal medicine, cardiovascular disease, echocardiography, and nuclear cardiology. Additionally, he is an active member of Hatzoloh of Flatbush since 1998.

Welcome New Providers

We are proud to welcome the following specialists to our Faculty Practice.

To see all the providers, click on “Find a Doctor” at maimo.org.

Jonathan Klein, MD
Radiation Oncology
718-765-2700

Abhigna Kodali
Hematology Oncology
(start date 8/15/22)
718-765-2600

Jared Rowley, MD
Radiation Oncology
718-765-2700

Featured Podcast



MAIMO MEDTALK

Not Your Mother's Knee Replacement: The Latest in Joint Replacement Surgery

Robotic surgery has been a game changer in the orthopedic field. Dr. Jason Wong discusses the latest technology in joint replacement surgery using robotic surgery. Maimonides Medical Center was named among America's Top 100 Hospitals for Orthopedic Surgery (Healthgrades, 2022).

<https://mimo.org/not-your-mothers-knee-replacement-the-latest-in-joint-replacement-surgery/>