

2. Identification

These recommendations are for healthcare professionals caring for people who have had suspected or confirmed [acute COVID-19](#) and present to any healthcare setting, irrespective of whether they were hospitalised or had a positive or negative SARS-CoV-2 test (PCR, antigen or antibody). Be aware that both children and adults can be affected by ongoing symptomatic COVID-19.

Info Box

Full details of the evidence and the panel's discussion are in the evidence reviews on [case definition, signs, symptoms and prevalence, children and young people, risk factors, impact of vaccines and views and experiences of patients, their families and carers](#).

Recommended

Use the following clinical case definitions to identify and diagnose the long-term effects of COVID-19:

Acute COVID-19

Signs and symptoms of COVID-19 for up to 4 weeks.

Ongoing symptomatic COVID-19

Signs and symptoms of COVID-19 from 4 weeks up to 12 weeks.

Post-COVID-19 syndrome

Signs and symptoms that develop during or after an infection consistent with COVID-19, continue for more than 12 weeks and are not explained by an alternative diagnosis. It usually presents with clusters of symptoms, often overlapping, which can fluctuate and change over time and can affect any system in the body. Post-COVID-19 syndrome may be considered before 12 weeks while the possibility of an alternative underlying disease is also being assessed.

In addition to the clinical case definitions, the term 'long COVID' is commonly used to describe signs and symptoms that continue or develop after acute COVID-19. It includes both ongoing symptomatic COVID-19 (from 4 to 12 weeks) and post-COVID-19 syndrome (12 weeks or more).

Codes have been developed that align with this case definition. See the practical info section for further details.

Practical Info

To support recording of clinical information and enable data extraction and exchange, codes have been developed that align with the case definition and support diagnosis, management and referral. These can be found in [NHS England and NHS Improvement's national guidance for post-COVID syndrome assessment clinics](#) (Appendix B), as part of the primary care coding minimum dataset.

The [Scottish Government's information support note for clinicians to support the management of the long-term effects of COVID-19 in primary and community care in Scotland](#) provides information on the relevant codes for EMIS PCS and Vision. It also includes targeted information for clinicians and support for healthcare teams, including information and links to resources to support a consistent approach in Scotland to clinical assessment, shared decision making and individualised care planning conversations, including self-management and further referral where needed.

Evidence To Decision

Benefits and harms

Evidence on the case definition was reviewed and no changes were made. See the [evidence review on case definition](#).

The panel recognised the importance of having a case definition for describing the long-term effects of COVID-19 and the need