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VA releases whole health approach to Long COVID

WASHINGTON — This month, the Department of Veterans Affairs published “[Whole Health System Approach to Long COVID](#)” — a guidebook for caring for Veterans with Long COVID.

The guidebook outlines a whole health, patient-centered approach to treating Long COVID, and it includes key information about Long COVID signs, symptoms, and treatment recommendations.

VA is releasing this guidebook as a continuation of our pledge to share COVID-19 best practices and lessons learned with other government agencies, private health care systems and practitioners.

“From the first day of the pandemic, VA’s clinicians and researchers have been on the front lines – saving lives and learning how to treat COVID-19 and Long COVID,” said **VA Secretary Denis McDonough**. “This guidebook packages up the best practices we’ve learned about treating Long COVID, and it will help health care providers across America improve the lives of Veterans and non-Veterans alike.”

As the largest health care system in the country, VA’s Veterans Health Administration clinicians and researchers were among the first health care providers to recognize the national pattern that a secondary illness was occurring in those who had initially recovered from COVID-19.

Since then, VA has established a multi-disciplinary Long COVID Community of Practice Team and opened more than 20 Long COVID programs. VA research has also led to key findings about Long COVID, including that patients who recovered from COVID-19 were significantly more likely to have heart and vascular disease a year after infection; patients who contracted COVID-19 had a 60% higher risk of mental health challenges one year after recovering; and more.

Whole Health focuses on an individual’s well-being by developing a personalized health plan based on values, needs and goals. Regarding Long COVID, Whole Health will help clinicians better define, assess, refer and manage the signs, symptoms and potential subsequent conditions of the illness. With the possibility of varying symptoms in one patient, a Whole Health approach will also allow clinicians to prioritize treatment based on the patient’s needs.

The guidebook will be periodically updated and republished as the scientific community learns more about Long COVID. This work is being done in coordination with the [National Research Action Plan on Long COVID](#).

Visit VA’s [public health](#) webpage for more information on VA’s approach to COVID-19 and other COVID-19 response reports.

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