

Long Covid Submission

The following submission details my experience of long COVID, particularly my diagnosis and treatment. I am a 60 year old female with post COVID-19 symptoms which has not been attributed to any other medical condition. Prior to testing positive to COVID-19 I led an active life which consisted of activities including long walks, several kilometres of bicycle rides per week, fulltime employment, family commitments and social interactions such as coffees and dinners with friends. Due to the requirements of my employment I had three vaccinations.

On the 16/05/2022 I performed a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) which indicated that I was positive for COVID-19. During the preceding three days all members of my household tested positive to COVID-19 therefore I was not surprised that I too was positive. I undertook the required isolation period.

I tested positive to COVID-19 up till day 11. I would consider myself to have felt mildly to moderately unwell. I developed a mild cough which only lasted for a couple of hours. My primary symptoms were exhaustion, severe headaches several times per day, stomach upset/nausea and loss of taste and smell. I anticipated feeling unwell for a couple of weeks after coming out of isolation and therefore took things easy and rested often.

After about a month of returning to work I realised that my headaches had set in, and that they were quite severe and occurred several times per day and required pain medication to manage; furthermore I remained extremely fatigued. My first visit to my very supportive General Practitioner (GP) resulted in a recommendation that I rest more, and she suggested that I consider working less, given that I was still working fulltime, five days per week. This was the first of frequent GP visits which resulted in various tests including CT scans, blood tests and an ECG test; all of which were returned “normal”, hence the suggestion that I was suffering post COVID symptoms. My primary symptoms which have come and gone over the past five months are as follows: significant fatigue, (which is different from feeling “tired” and is often palpable), headaches, pins and needles in my face and head, body aches and pains, jaw pain, sleep disturbance, mouth ulcers and stomach disorders/nausea which appeared to be related to my level of fatigue. I have highlighted these symptoms as I did not experience them prior to contracting the virus. I continue to struggle with fatigue, constant muscles aches, jaw soreness, headaches which require medication, digestion problems/nausea and pins and needles in my face and head.

There are several medical avenues that I have pursued over the past 5 months; sometimes vigorously, and dependant on my energy levels and which may be of assistance to others.

- Remedial massage – generally helpful and provides temporary relief from muscular pain.
- Physiotherapy appointments – these are often twice weekly and are currently extremely helpful. That said, I tried a few physiotherapists, and I took some time to find a physiotherapist whom I felt was helpful. My current

physiotherapist is able to pinpoint and release the exact muscles that are bothersome thus providing some relief.

- Hydrotherapy – it is very helpful to immerse a tired and sore body in a warm pool. I find this to be an extremely mindful experience, and a great relief for tension and therefore head to the hydrotherapy pool once to twice per week, again dependant on energy levels.
- Yoga/stretching. I can manage a ten minute stretch, either morning or evening. At times I feel wiped out for several hours after stretching too hard, so I have to manage this quite carefully and I don't do yoga if I feel tired as over exertion has not been helpful.
- Multivitamins including vitamin B, C, D and Magnesium. I am unsure of the efficacy of this cocktail of multivitamins, but I still take them in the hope that these are helpful.

Given I have a background in psychology I am aware of the impact of the chronicity of my ailments upon my mental health. Therefore I practice mindfulness, mostly daily. I adhere to a healthy lifestyle balance and generally avoid foods that will give me an energy high, which is invariably followed by a “crash”. Short bicycle rides are few and far between and most likely results in feeling “wiped out” for a couple days afterwards. Bicycle riding was a regular activity which occurred several times per week prior to contracting the virus however this is no longer possible. Importantly, I try not to give myself a hard time when I am just surviving and can't do as much as compared to my pre COVID-19 capacity. I am recovering, albeit incrementally. For me, the key is to keep moving at a level that instils some level of motivation, whilst not overdoing it. I get tired of talking about the effects of the virus on me, so I minimise how I feel sometimes. I decided around six weeks ago that “I will no longer become emotional when I think about how fatigued I feel”. I feel this mental attitude is helpful for me in moving forward. I have not returned to a full workload and generally work on average three and a half to four days per week, despite being employed on a fulltime basis. Activity away from work is minimal and totally dependent on my energy levels and this is markedly different from my previous schedule.

I am also aware of the impact of my health upon my family and feel their concern when I am found asleep during the day. This is something that I rarely did in my pre COVID lifestyle.

I would welcome a long COVID clinic in Perth. For me and others this could be a place where health practitioners and a multi-disciplinary team could be of assistance in managing the many health difficulties associated with COVID-19.