

## **Third of adults aged 65 years or older at risk for one or more long COVID symptoms**

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One in three older adults reported one or more new or persistent COVID-19 symptoms following acute SARS-CoV-2 infection, researchers reported in *BMJ*.

**Ken Cohen, MD, BS**, executive director of translational research at Optum Labs in Minnetonka, Minnesota, and colleagues conducted a retrospective study among people aged 65 years or older who were continuously enrolled in a Medicare Advantage plan with coverage of prescription drugs from January 2019 through the date they were diagnosed with COVID-19.

A total of 133,366 individuals aged 65 years or older with COVID-19 met the study criteria. The researchers matched participants to three comparison groups — one for 2020 (n = 87,337), one for 2019 (n = 88,070) and people with viral lower respiratory tract illness (n = 73,490).

Among people infected with SARS-CoV-2, 32% had a new or persistent symptoms in the post-acute period, including 16% who had a diagnosis that required medical attention and 16% who had at least two diagnoses requiring medical attention.

“These outcomes included chronic respiratory failure, cardiac sequelae (including cardiac rhythm disorders and acute coronary syndromes), hypercoagulability, neurological disorders (such as encephalopathy, dementia, memory difficulties, and stroke), kidney injury, diabetes and anemia,” the authors wrote.

The authors reported that people with COVID-19 were more likely to be older men, have a lower socioeconomic status, be Black or Hispanic, live in the midwestern or northeastern part of the U.S., have a pre-existing condition, have had a long hospital stay within the previous year and have visited a physician more often, the authors reported.

These data were relative to their unmatched 2019 or 2020 groups. Similar patterns were shown among those in the viral lower respiratory tract group. However, the additional factors of having asthma and being more likely to smoke were added.

The amount of people with one of more symptoms of long COVID was 11% higher than anyone in the 2020 group, 7.9% higher than anyone in the 2019 group and 1.4% lower than those in the respiratory tract group.

Those hospitalized with COVID-19 were 23.6% more likely to have one or more symptoms of long COVID compared with the 2020 group. They were 19% and 8.9% more likely in the 2019 and respiratory groups, respectively.

“These data can help to define the sequelae of SARS-CoV-2 infection in the post-acute phase in the older adult population, and to evaluate and manage these patients appropriately,” the authors wrote.