

# New study shows how having had COVID-19 may negatively impact your performance at work

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Individuals who contract COVID-19 often experience memory, attention, and concentration problems, even after recovering from the initial illness. A new study from the University of Waterloo shows individuals who had contracted COVID-19 reported significantly more cognitive failures at work.

"COVID-19 is going to be an ongoing part of life, at least for the foreseeable future," said James Beck, an associate professor in Waterloo's Psychology department. "It is now common for people to catch COVID-19, recover, and then return to work. Yet, in our study, people who had contracted COVID-19 reported more difficulties at work, relative to people who had never caught COVID."

Beck and his graduate student, Arden Flow, collected data from a sample of 94 [full-time](#) working adults who either had or had not contracted COVID-19 at least one month prior to the study. Both groups were matched on key

demographic characteristics.

"Relative to the group who had never had COVID-19, the group who had contracted COVID-19 reported more cognitive failures at work, which are defined as problems with memory, attention, and action," Beck said.

A second finding of the work is that cognitive failures were associated with decreased self-ratings of job performance, as well as increased intentions to voluntarily leave one's current job.

"These results may have important implications for managers and organizations more broadly," Beck said. "Individuals returning to work after contracting COVID-19 may experience difficulties returning to their pre-COVID-19 level of performance, and accommodations may be necessary. These accommodations might include reducing workloads, extending deadlines, or providing flexible work arrangements."

The study, "The effects of contracting COVID-19 on cognitive failures at work: implications for task performance and turnover intentions," authored by Beck and Flow, was recently published in the journal *Scientific Reports*.

**More information:** James W. Beck et al, The effects of contracting COVID-19 on cognitive failures at work: implications for task performance and turnover intentions, *Scientific Reports* (2022). [DOI: 10.1038/s41598-022-13051-1](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-022-13051-1)

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