

Experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 is associated with poorer mental health

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Having symptoms of COVID-19 has been associated with worse mental health and lower life satisfaction.

The study, which is part of the COVID-19 Longitudinal Health and Wellbeing National Core Study, is published today in *The Lancet*

Psychiatry. The study is led by researchers from King's College London and University College London in collaboration with several UK institutions. The study looked at the impact of COVID-19 infection on subsequent mental health and well-being.

Data was taken from 11 [longitudinal studies](#) between April 2020 and April 2021, in which there were 54,442 participants with and without self-reported COVID-19.

Researchers found that rises in [psychological distress](#), depression, anxiety, and lower life satisfaction were associated with prior self-reported COVID-19. The associations with poorer mental health did not lessen over time after infection, highlighting the potential enduring impacts of the disease and the need for a longer follow-up process from health care providers.

Self-reported COVID-19 was consistently associated with psychological distress, regardless of whether people tested positive for antibodies to the virus. These effects of infection were felt similarly in different groups of gender, ethnicity and socio-economic circumstances.

The study suggests that the infection of COVID-19 might impact mental health most in [older people](#) as people with self-reported infection aged 50 years and older showed a stronger association with poorer mental health. This might reflect that older people are more likely to experience more severe COVID-19 symptoms, greater worry around infection, and increased risk of blood vessel (microvascular) or brain (neurological) changes after infection. This contrasts to the effect of the pandemic overall on mental health, where previous studies have shown that women and adults aged 25-44 have had the greatest adverse impacts.

Joint first author Dr. Ellen Thompson from King's College London said, "These findings suggest that there were prolonged mental health

consequences of COVID-19 infection for some people at the beginning of this pandemic. Understanding why this is the case will be key to finding treatment strategies for those affected as well as preventing such effects in future pandemic waves."

Senior author Prof. Praveetha Patalay from University College London said, "This study brings together many of the UK's longitudinal studies to provide a comprehensive overview of the impacts of COVID-19 infection on population mental [health](#). Compared to most studies to-date that have focused on more severe and hospitalized cases, this study demonstrates the impact of [infection](#) during a pandemic on overall population [mental health](#) and well-being."

Provided by King's College London

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