

# Long-haul COVID symptoms? Getting vaccine won't make you feel worse, study finds

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(HealthDay)—COVID survivors can relax when it comes to vaccination: A new study shows that getting immunized will not worsen any symptoms that linger long after infection, such as breathing difficulties, fatigue and insomnia.

The encouraging takeaway is based on a small analysis that looked at how 44 "long-haul" British COVID patients fared after being inoculated with the first dose of either the Pfizer or the AstraZeneca vaccine.

"This is the first study to show that people recovering from COVID-19, with persistent symptoms—'long-haul COVID-19'—do not develop any deterioration in their symptoms after vaccination," said study author Fergus Hamilton. "This is important, as it is in people's best interest to be vaccinated, to afford maximal protection, even if they have contracted COVID-19 infection previously."

Hamilton is a National Institute for Health Research academic clinical fellow with the North Bristol NHS Trust and the University of Bristol in England. He added that he hopes that his team's observations "will reassure those who might be hesitant with residual COVID-19 symptoms when called for vaccination."

One U.S. expert wholeheartedly agrees.

"There are number of patients who experienced 'long COVID' that are naturally concerned that getting COVID vaccination could worsen or trigger their prior symptoms," explained Dr. Colin Franz, who was not involved in the British effort.

Beyond fatigue and respiratory issues, he cited a number of potentially chronic COVID-related issues, including the loss of sense of smell, poor concentration, muscle aches, low-grade fevers, headaches and tingling sensations.

Among hospitalized patients, such chronic COVID concerns are not uncommon, noted Franz, a clinician-scientist with the Shirley Ryan AbilityLab and an assistant professor of physical medicine and rehabilitation and neurology with Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago.

In fact, Franz said it's more common than not among patients who have required breathing tube assistance (intubation) while hospitalized. "[Even] for people who were never hospitalized, data suggests the incidence of 'long COVID' may be around 10%," he added.

"[So] I think this fear patients have is quite valid after going through an experience like this, especially since several long COVID symptoms—such as a low-grade fever, headache and muscle aches lasting for a couple days after COVID vaccine—are quite common," Franz said.

But the British analysis "reassures that there were no long-term negative effects on life quality" a month after getting vaccinated, he added.

A total of 163 long-haul COVID patients—all from one British hospital—were included in the study.

At the time of the study launch, all had been battling enduring health issues for eight months after being hospitalized for COVID-19. About three-quarters reported struggling with lingering fatigue, while roughly 6 in 10 reported routine breathlessness. Insomnia was another issue for just over half the patients. All together, the patients reported a constellation of 159 different chronic COVID-triggered symptoms and a markedly impaired quality of life.

Just over a quarter of the patients (44) went on to be vaccinated with the first of two doses of either the Pfizer or the AstraZeneca vaccine, which

make use of different delivery strategies. Without knowing who had been vaccinated, the research team evaluated all the patients a month after their first shot.

The result: Among those who were vaccinated, more than 8 in 10 said they still struggled with symptoms a month out. But nearly a quarter (23%) said their overall situation had improved, and nearly 7 in 10 said their [symptom](#) status had essentially remained the same.

Fewer than 6% said their health concerns had gotten worse. And none of the patients reported any decline in quality of life, regardless of which vaccine they had received.

The findings are helpful from a public health perspective, said Franz, because getting vaccinated is important, even among those who've already had COVID-19.

"Studies are actively looking into the duration of immunity for those who have recovered from prior COVID infection," Franz noted. "It appears that antibodies created against the virus may only provide transient protection from reinfection. The different virus strains emerging further complicate matters."

So the recommendation, said Franz, "is to still get vaccinated, even if you have recovered from prior COVID."

Hamilton and his colleagues published their findings recently in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

**More information:** There's more on long COVID at the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).



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