

## From lung scarring to heart damage, COVID-19 affects the body long after the virus is gone

Because Covid-19 is a new disease, there are no studies about its long-term trajectory for those with more severe symptoms; even the earliest patients to recover in China were only infected a few months ago. But doctors say the novel coronavirus can attach to human cells in many parts of the body and penetrate many major organs, including the heart, kidneys, brain, and even blood vessels.

“The difficulty is sorting out long-term consequences,” says Joseph Brennan, a cardiologist at the Yale School of Medicine. While some patients may fully recover, he and other experts worry others will suffer long-term damage, including lung scarring, heart damage, and neurological and mental health effects.

The UK National Health Service assumes that of Covid-19 patients who have required hospitalization, [45 percent](#) will need ongoing medical care, 4 percent will require inpatient rehabilitation, and 1 percent will permanently require acute care. Other preliminary evidence, as well as historical research on other coronaviruses like [SARS] and [[MERS](#)] suggests that for some people, a full recovery might still be years off. For others, there may be no returning to normal.

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“I felt imprisoned within my body, imprisoned within my home, and tremendously ignored and misunderstood by the general public, and even those closest to me,” [Lauren] Nichols says about her battle with Covid-19. “I feel incredibly alone.”

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