

Long COVID: This woman's symptoms started the day COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic. A year later, she is still struggling

The same day a global pandemic was declared, [Rachel Van Lear] developed symptoms of COVID-19. A year later, she's still waiting for them to disappear. And for experts to come up with some answers.

The Texas woman is one of thousands of self-described long-haulers, patients with symptoms that linger or develop out of the blue months after they first became infected with coronavirus.

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"We're faced with a mystery," said Dr. Francis Collins, chief of the National Institutes of Health.

Is it a condition unique to COVID-19, or just a variation of the syndrome that can occur after other infections? How many people are affected, and how long does it last? Is it a new form of chronic fatigue syndrome — a condition with similar symptoms?

Or could some symptoms be unrelated to their COVID-19 but a physical reaction to the upheaval of this past pandemic year?

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These are the questions facing scientists as they search for disease markers, treatments and cures. With \$1 billion from Congress, Collins' agency is designing and soliciting studies that aim to follow at least 20,000 people who've had COVID-19.

"We've never really been faced with a post-infectious condition of this magnitude so this is unprecedented," Collins said [March 8]. "We don't have time to waste."

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