

Long COVID can strip away a decade's worth of exercise gains, study suggests

Long covid can rob people of health, energy, employment and joy. It may also strip away the equivalent of a decade's worth of aerobic fitness, according to a large-scale new scientific review of long covid patients and exercise.

The [study](#), which was published in JAMA Network Open, aggregated results from dozens of earlier experiments to show that people with long covid typically have lower endurance capacity and find working out much harder than other people of similar ages who developed covid but recovered.

The findings add to mounting evidence, from both experiments and people's experiences, that "something is going on" in many people who develop long covid that makes exercise challenging, if not impossible, said Matthew Durstenfeld, a cardiologist at Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital and professor at the University of California at San Francisco Department of Medicine, who led the new study.

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Typically, long covid is diagnosed based on a constellation of symptoms that includes headaches, fatigue, brain fog, joint pain and others. Many people with long covid also anecdotally report they cannot exercise or even walk around the block without feeling winded and exhausted.

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In general, those who had gotten over covid showed normal exercise capacity for their age. But those with long covid had the stamina of someone 10 years older. Forty-year-olds would jog or cycle like "someone in their fifties," Durstenfeld said.

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