

WATKINS FARM STORES

Long-Covid

A Guide for Managers



Content

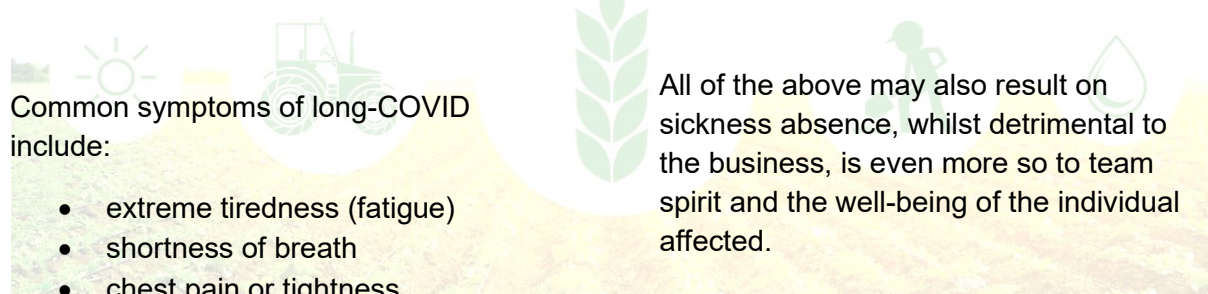
- ❖ Who is this guide for
- ❖ What is long COVID
- ❖ How does it impact employees
- ❖ How to support employees
- ❖ Following guidelines and policies
- ❖ Further support

Who is this guide for

This guide is for managers across the Watkins group. It helps raise awareness of long-COVID and provide the support needed to our 150+ employees across the UK, especially those living with long-COVID.

What is long-COVID

Long-COVID, also known as post-COVID-19 are symptoms caused by virus months and weeks after a COVID infection.



Common symptoms of long-COVID include:

- extreme tiredness (fatigue)
- shortness of breath
- chest pain or tightness
- problems with memory and concentration ("brain fog")
- difficulty sleeping (insomnia)
- heart palpitations
- dizziness
- pins and needles
- joint pain
- depression and anxiety
- tinnitus, earaches
- feeling sick, diarrhoea, stomach aches, loss of appetite
- a high temperature, cough, headaches, sore throat, changes to sense of smell or taste
- rashes

How does it impact employees

Our workforce is not exempt from COVID-19 infection and some of our colleagues will experience long-COVID.

Given the symptoms experienced, it will have a significant long term impact on their health, physical and mental, general well-being, as well as on performance, if it affects employees ability to perform their role.

Other more serious implications will include health and safety, theirs as well that of others around them, depending on the job roles and equipment being operated. Moreover, As per our Driving Policy, we have a duty of care to those driving to their workplace.

All of the above may also result on sickness absence, whilst detrimental to the business, is even more so to team spirit and the well-being of the individual affected.

How to Support Employees

Talk

Ensure that all employees are aware of what long-COVID is and foster a culture where everyone can talk freely about it, especially those who are living with it, as well as those who may not be aware how to recognise the symptoms and also for them to support their colleagues.

Well-being

Well-being is part of Watkins strategy for workforce development and growth and therefore, regular well-being sense check should form part of each teams weekly check-in and regular one-to-one meetings.

Return to Work

Encourage open discussion around it, especially for employees who have been infected by COVID, to check how they are doing.

If someone is returning to work and we know that in the past they had COVID, discuss whether the symptoms of their recent illness could be related to long-COVID.

Time for Medical Appointment

Encourage your team to seek medical attention if they are experiencing long-Covid. They may need time to attend appointments, blood test or x-rays. Refer to the Absence from Work Policy which outlines support and time awarded for medical appointment for team living with long-term conditions. If you have suggestion to improve the terms of the policy, please use our Online Suggestion box on our intranet or bring it to the Employee Forum who will then relay it to the Senior Leadership Team.

Reasonable Adjustment/Re-assignment

If the ability to perform their role is affected by the symptoms of long-COVID, managers should consider options for reasonable adjustment and also consider if there is a potential for reassignment, under our legal obligations to the employee. See the guidelines and policies section for further guidance.

Working hours and pattern

Make the employees aware of options for Flexible and Home Working where this can be arranged, as per the role and tasks. This will come out of the discussions with the employee as to how they are affected and what support they need

Workload

Discuss the employees workload and how long-COVID is affecting performance. We have a duty of care to our employees and if their workload is no longer appropriate as a consequence of how they are affected by long-COVID, this should be addressed, to avoid burn out.

Following guidelines and policies

Disability

Long-COVID fits the description of a disability as it is a long-term and substantial (not minor) physical and/or mental impairment which adversely affects one's ability to perform their duty.

This means where the condition has lasted or is likely to have lasted over 12 months or indefinitely.

EDI Policies

Employees who have a disability are protected under the Equality Act and should not be treated less favourably and are protected from discrimination and harassment as per our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

As such there is a requirement to make reasonable adjustment to support employees do their work and where possible, re-assignment to another role which is more suitable.

Flexible Working Policy

Our flexible working policy is available to all employees. Although legally an employee needs to have been employed by us for 26 weeks to be eligible to apply, Watkins Group offers this benefit from day one of employment. Watkins will also consider a request even if there has been one in the last 12 months, in order to support someone with long-COVID, as part of reasonable adjustment.

Employees need to make a request in writing and unless there is a business reason why it cannot be approved, we will aim to support employees in their request for flexible working, which may constitute hybrid working, home working and reduced hours, start/finishing time.



Further Support

CIPD

ACAS

Sources

CIPD, working with long Covid, Research Evidence to Inform Support

Employment Law Lecture – Capital Law Disability Discrimination

<https://akologic.info/> - accessed 23/02/2022

<https://www.acas.org.uk/making-a-flexible-working-request>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/long-term-effects-of-coronavirus-long-covid/> - accessed 20/02/2022

<https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus> - accessed 23/02/2022

