

WHAT IS LONG COVID?



COVID-19 affects everyone differently and an individual's ability to recover quicker than others. Those that don't recover as quick can be diagnosed with Long COVID. Most individuals recover in days or weeks, most recovering within 12 weeks – although some symptoms can last much longer, i.e. Long COVID. [Find out more here](#)

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR?



Symptoms after a COVID 19 infection 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

If symptoms do not ease after 4 weeks, it is advised that GP support is sought.

Long COVID, whilst a relatively new illness, can have major consequences to individuals and the business if support is not provided as soon as is possibly viable. Due to the varied work carried out at Watkins Farm Stores, this leaflet's aim is to safeguard managers on when to intervene, to protect our people and to avoid any risks or claims brought to the business.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING SUPPORT



The COVID pandemic has had an adverse effect on everybody's mental and physical health at work. Knowing when to intervene and support yourself and employees is critical to keeping everyone safe. [Read up on where to access support here.](#) This is what you can do:

Employees

- Make a referral to Stress Counselling
- Signpost to our COVID Support Programme
- Keep regular, honest, and open dialogue
- Focus on what makes you happy and build a routine

Managers

- Look after you before all else
- Reflect on the positives
- Do not make assumptions
- Agree clear, achievable adjustments
- Reassure safety is the no.1 priority

WHO TO CONTACT

For Long COVID advice - Human Resources
HR@watkinsfarmstores.co.uk

Managing Workplace Risk - Health and Safety
H&S@watkinsfarmstores.co.uk

For a OH referral - Occupational Health
OccHealth@watkinsfarmstores.co.uk

For Ill Health Retirement - Pensions and Payroll
servicecentrehelpdesk@watkinsfarmstores.co.uk

Trade Unions
tradeunionenquiries@watkinsfarmstores.co.uk

Employee Assistance Programmes
StressCounselling@watkinsfarmstores.co.uk
Covidsupport@watkinsfarmstores.co.uk

WATKINS FARM STORES



MANAGING LONG COVID

Your quick, digital, step-by-step guide...



Click on the Image above to find out more about Long COVID

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?



WORKPLACE INJURY

If there is an injury at work due to a symptom of Long COVID that has not been identified by management, the employee can look to raise an injury claim that can be costly to the business, but most importantly, the reputational damage of Watkins Farm Stores as an employer.



INTERNAL PRESSURES

Long COVID is becoming more common in workforces across the UK, where if not managed and without the right support put in place at the right time, can put pressure on internal resources. This will lead to burnouts, lower productivity and organisational effectiveness. Employees could resign and claim constructive dismissal if not managed internally where a toxic culture can be created.



UNFAIR DISMISSAL CLAIMS

Watkins Farm Stores cannot dismiss an employee with absence caused by Long COVID without necessary support provided before hand. This can bring unfair dismissal claims. Managers need to carry out a full, transparent and clear process on managing health capability.



DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION

As Long COVID is a new illness, the long term impact is not known. Under law, a disability is a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial and long-term' negative effect on a person's ability to do normal day-to-day activities. Long COVID can affect a person's day-to-day activities and can also cause other impairments. Therefore, there is potential for employees to claim disability discrimination in the long run if not managed correctly.



WHISTLE BLOWING

If an employee is to make a protected disclosure on the mis-management of Long COVID at Watkins Farm Stores, employees could look to claim unfair dismissal if managers decide to dismiss an employee due to their complaint.

HOW TO SUPPORT EMPLOYEES WITH LONG COVID



LEARN WHAT LONG COVID IS

Familiarise yourself to understand the impact of Long COVID from an employee and employer perspective. To really understand how to support your employee, you need to understand how Long COVID may affect them. [Find out more here](#) and [watch this Video](#)

REGULAR CONTACT WITH EMPLOYEE

Maintain regular contact with the employee to ensure that both employee and employer are up to date and offer adjustments if the employee is in work or away from work due to sickness.

ENGAGE HEALTH AND SAFETY

Health and Safety will be able to offer Workplace Risk Assessments to minimise the risk of those with Long COVID at work, causing unnecessary risk or injury. If there is long term risk, in agreement with Occupational Health, the employee might be medically unfit to do their current role, seeking redeployment.

MAKE AN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH REFERRAL

In agreement with the employee, getting an occupational health assessment can establish from a workplace perspective, what reasonable adjustments can be put in place to support the employee back to work or whilst in work. These could include:

- Working different hours on a temporary basis
- Flexible Working / Reduction of Hours / Phased Return
- Pomodoro Working (specifically for Brain Fog)
- A change in duties (Medical Redeployment)

WHAT ABOUT THE LONGER IMPACT?

If Occupational Health determine the employee to be permanently, medically unfit due to Long COVID, the following options can be explored, so long as support and reasonable adjustments have been previously offered. HR will support managers with these:

- Ill Health Retirement
- Health Capability Dismissal

FOOD FOR THOUGHT



[Lough v Taaks of Scotland Ltd and Singh – Employment Tribunal September 2021](#) (click on link to find out more)

Whistleblowing Case - Key Points

- Employee Furloughed, with pay reduced to 80%, without agreement.
- Employee was disabled, under the Equality Act 2010, having cancer treatment.
- Employee complained and was dismissed.
- Employee brought an unfair dismissal claim
- Employee claimed detrimental treatment for making protected disclosures (whistle blowing).
- ET ordered payment of **£1,327.34** for furloughing without agreement, **£18,000** compensation for not complying with Whistleblowing and **compensation for ongoing financial loss for 52 weeks.**

[Accattatis v Fortuna Group \(London\) Ltd – Employment Tribunal May 2021](#) (click on the link to find out more)

Unfair dismissal due to workplace danger - Key Points

- Employee claimed unfair dismissal following a dispute with employer about furlough, working from home and workplace danger.
- Employer stayed open in March 2020 lockdown but offered employees wanting to avoid the workplace to take paid or unpaid leave.
- Employee requested to work from home, refused due to costs associated with arranging remote access and the need for the employee to assist with physical deliveries.
- Employee further requested furlough, which was refused as there was work for the employee to do.
- Employer dismissed employee, failure to comply with company policy, just before the two-year requirement to submit unfair dismissal claims.
- Employee still brought a claim saying they left the workplace 'due to a reasonable belief in a serious and imminent danger.'
- The primary motive here was financial over Health and Safety, where the employment tribunal found the claim not to be founded.

[Prosser v Community Gateway Association Ltd – Employment Tribunal – 13th May 2021](#) (click on the link to find out more)

Pregnancy and Maternity Discrimination - Key Points

- Employee sent home in March 2020 due to being clinically vulnerable to COVID 19 because of pregnancy.
- Employee brought a claim to direct pregnancy discrimination
- Employer won tribunal due to rectifying arrears of pay and putting in place the necessary risk assessments and PPE to return to work.

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