

COVID-19: A Silent Threat to Mental Health



The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on global mental health. During 2020, we saw a staggering...

28%

INCREASE IN

major depressive disorder

26%

INCREASE IN

anxiety disorders

Understanding post-COVID neuropsychiatric conditions

Post-COVID neuropsychiatric conditions refer to new or worsening mental health symptoms that develop after a COVID-19 infection. When dealing with mental health conditions that follow a COVID-19 infection like depression and anxiety, it's crucial to recognize that:

- **COVID-19 is a unique trigger:** It causes new mental health symptoms at higher rates than other respiratory infections.
- **Chronic stress hurts mental and physical health:** The ongoing pandemic has contributed to a cumulative burden of stress, impacting mental and physical well-being.

Dispelling a common misconception

Pre-existing mental health conditions **do not cause** post-COVID mental health issues. Instead, COVID-19 itself appears to be the main cause of these new or worsening mental health issues. Experts believe the body's inflammatory response to the virus is to blame.

Risk factors for post-COVID neuropsychiatric conditions

Several factors can increase the risk of developing post-COVID neuropsychiatric symptoms:

- Severe COVID-19 illness
- Pre-existing medical conditions
- History of depression, anxiety, stress or loneliness

Additionally, certain populations are at a higher risk for COVID-19 infection and consequently, post-COVID mental health issues:

- People from underrepresented racial and ethnic minority groups
- People with physical disabilities
- LGBTQ+ individuals

Your role as a health care provider

As a health care provider, it's essential to be vigilant for signs of mental health changes in your patients, especially those who have recovered from COVID-19. Early identification and intervention can significantly improve outcomes. By understanding the connection between COVID-19 and mental health, you can provide essential support and care for your patients.

