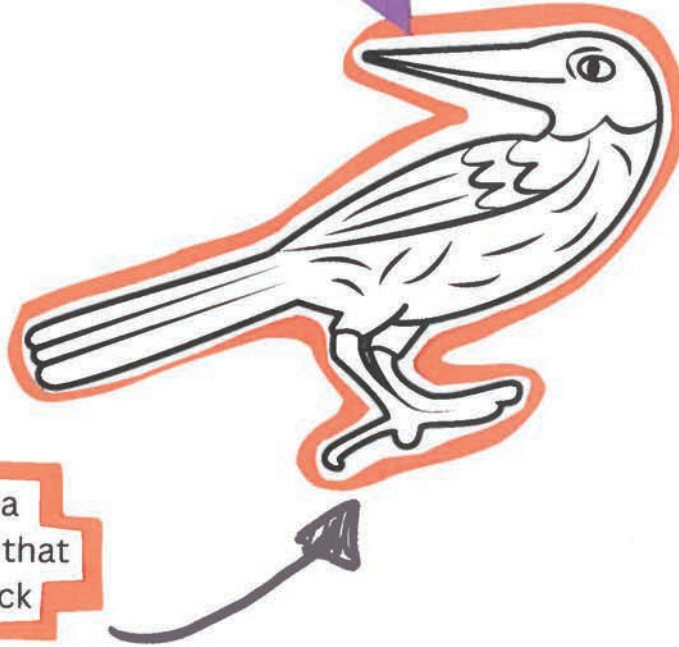


Special Edition Zine

No denial,
minimizing, or
gaslighting here.



Caladrius, a
mythical bird that
heals the sick



400 million people affected by Long
COVID = 400 million reasons to care!

The Sick Times is a journalist-founded non-profit news site chronicling the Long COVID crisis.

Betsy Ladyzhets (co-founder/managing editor)

Miles W. Griffis (co-founder/executive editor)

Heather Hogan (Engagement editor)

James Salanga (Podcast Producer)

Lygia Navarro (Contributing writer)

Britta Shoot (Contributing writer)

Simon Spichak (Contributing writer)

Fi Lowenstein (Contributing writer)

Sophie Dimitriou (Logo/branding)

Gale Bonker (Web developer)

Katie Drackert (Zine maker)

Follow *The Sick Times* socials, newsletter, and podcast for more! @thesicktimes on all platforms.

The Astrology of The Sick Times

A little something for the astrology fans out there! Did you know that birth charts go beyond individuals? Places and businesses have birth charts too! The Sick Times' "big three" is a Scorpio Sun, Sagittarius Moon, and Aquarius rising. This big three boasts a uniquely progressive space. A space that wants to offer expansive thinking, justice for the collective, portals of transformation, introducing new philosophy, and doing all of these things in a precise manner. With two fixed signs and one mutable sign, there's a grounded energy within The Sick Times, one that has a clear goal. However, the mutable energy placed in the moon allows for easier pivots and new ways of being than perhaps another fixed or cardinal sign. Overall, this is a fantastic astrological set up for a project that is as ahead of the curve as The Sick Times.



Special thanks to our advisory board!

Ed Yong

Julie Rehmeyer

Julia Moore Vogel, PhD

Dr. Monica Verduzco-Gutierrez

Thanks also to our fiscal sponsor, the MuckRock Foundation.

Creating art about the Long COVID experience

Part 2



Photo credit: Heather Schulte, *Stitching the Situation*

Another artist, Boulder-based Heather Schulte, took a different approach to visualizing the COVID-19 pandemic. She began a cross-stitching project called "Stitching the Situation," to track "each day's case and death counts in the United States... [through] intricate designs," in an attempt to catalog the 1.2+ million people who have died of COVID-19 in the U.S., with the "official excess world count over 25 million, according to the Economist." Schulte has turned the project into a collaborative effort following the end of COVID as a declared public health emergency. This allows people across the U.S. to build on each other's stitching projects in recognition of the ongoing pandemic.



Want to participate in Heather's project?
← Scan here!

What is Long COVID?

Long COVID is a multi-systemic disease and set of health issues following SARS-CoV-2 (Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2) infection. These could be: new health issues, ongoing issues, or worsening of previous symptoms or conditions. It can cause significant disability and can be fatal. It is a continuing health crisis.

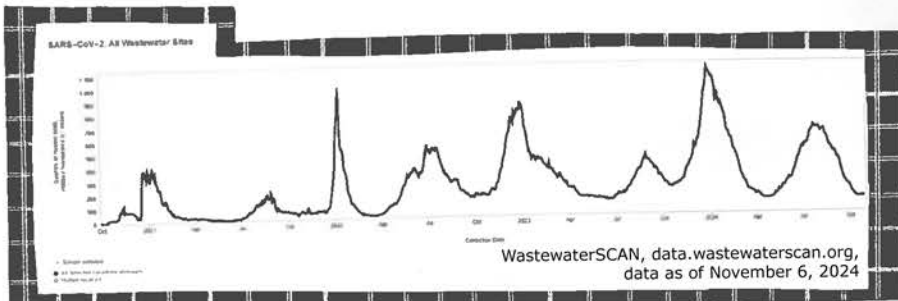
The best way to prevent Long COVID is by preventing SARS-CoV-2 infection and reinfection

Since SARS-CoV-2 is airborne, the most effective means of prevention is through masking with an N95 or KN95 high-quality mask.



The Sick Times and Long COVID Justice have collaborated on a free resource series called Long COVID Essentials, which goes into the details of Long COVID symptoms, COVID-19 prevention, how to get help, and related diseases. Scan the QR code below or go to tiny.cc/LCE to access the complete series

COVID-19 Trends



Despite many politicians, mainstream media outlets, and other institutions insisting that the pandemic is "over," COVID-19 continues to spread through the U.S. and globally at high levels. Similar to 2023, this past year was marked by two surges — one in winter and one in summer — and in between, our collective viral baseline creeps ever higher. Wastewater surveillance, i.e. population-level data collected from our poop, is not precise enough to tell us exactly how many people are sick with COVID-19 but it is reliable enough to say the disease is very much still with us.

~~"During the pandemic"~~

~~"When COVID happened"~~

~~"During COVID"~~

✓ "Ongoing pandemic"

At least 40,000 Americans have died of COVID-19 in 2024. That number is likely a significant undercount due to decreased testing.

Creating art about the Long COVID experience

Part 1



Photo credit: Daphne Mir, Illmarks

Artist and lighting designer Daphne Mir began their art series, "Illmarks," in late 2023 to attempt to illustrate their Long COVID symptoms. The art project features bookmark-sized vertical slips of paper that each showcase the illustrated figure of a body and a graphic interpretation of the symptoms Daphne experienced, annotated with the date and a description of the symptoms, marking the artist's illness through time. Daphne has expanded to include a portrait section of other individuals, "friends & lovers," living with Long COVID, and is currently taking submissions for virtual art models and stories.



Want to submit to Daphne's project?
→ scan here!



Mask Blocs & Clean Air Orgs

Illustration by @kitten.cowboy

Clean Air Organizations operate as air purifier lending libraries, allowing folks to access air purifiers for various public events and personal use. The first actualization of a clean air org was Clean Air Club in Chicago. Clean Air Club sparked inspiration for many, with over 30 clean air organizations across the world now in existence. Some of them are founded or operated by people with Long COVID such as Clean Air Narm.

"I started [Clean Air Narm] because I don't want to see all my friends disabled in the same way that I have been," they say. "If you lead with a solution, people are sometimes more open to hearing about what the problem is in the first place." - Themme Fatale, Founder of Clean Air Narm

Mask Blocs are grassroots mutual aid organizations that distribute respirator masks for free, sometimes along with other pandemic-related supplies such as air purifiers and rapid tests.

Many mask bloc organizers have personal experiences that motivate them to spend their time and limited funds sharing supplies with others in their communities, such as surviving on limited resources or living with a disability and/or Long COVID.

"I'm constantly feeling like: Wow, I have no degree or experience doing any work similar to this, and most mask bloc members I know are in a similar situation," N. says. "Why the fuck are we being more effective and doing more education [than leadership in institutions]?"

Want to start a Clean Air Org in your city? Here's an article from The Sick Times written by Emily Dupree and Shelby Seier.



Reporting by Britta Shoot

Policy & Advocacy

January 18, 2024



Angela Vázquez, former president of Body Politic, speaks during the January 18 Senate hearing about Long COVID. Photo via Senate HELP Committee.

The U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) convened a hearing on Long COVID that was attended by multiple LC advocacy groups.

Thanks to pressure from advocates leading up to the hearing, a large number of Senators were in attendance.

March 15, 2024

Photo by Robb Hill, The Sick Times



A Long COVID DC demonstration took place in commemoration of Long COVID Awareness Day. Protestors gathered and "shared demands for the federal government: To declare Long COVID a national emergency, for immediate treatments, and for more federal support and acknowledgment of the disease."

We take care of each other.

Policy & Advocacy

August 2024



Sen. Bernie Sanders introduced the Long COVID Research Moonshot Act of 2024 in August, which incorporated input from the Long COVID community.

The Moonshot bill proposes that the National Institute of Health (NIH) "set up a Long COVID research advisory board and consult with patient-led organizations and advocacy groups representing people with Long COVID and related diseases...specifically listing Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME), postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome (POTS), and chronic Lyme disease as priorities."

Whats next for Moonshot?

Introduced in the House of Representatives by Rep. Ilhan Omar in September

Needs majority votes of approval from both Senate and House

Chances are uncertain under the next President

The Stigma Surrounding Long COVID

Institutional Denial

The institutional denial of COVID-19 and the pandemic itself lends itself to a deeply rooted stigma toward Long COVID. As national and local public health entities downplay the severity of COVID-19, people are trusting what alleged experts say is true.

Public Perception

Since public health officials and the medical industry at large have downplayed the severity of COVID-19 for nearly half a decade, many people longer view this as a threat to themselves or others. Why would they think society needs awareness, funding, or research for something that is "mild?"

Research

Often researchers ignore patients with lived experiences, and defer to harmful theories around treating Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME, also sometimes called chronic fatigue syndrome, CFS). ME is an illness that predates Long COVID, and is one that impacts many people (with and without LC). Research for Long COVID is underfunded and deprioritized despite its impact on millions of lives. Harmful research telling people with Long COVID to exercise through their fatigue has been disputed by ME advocates prior to the existence of COVID.

Care

On average it takes 17 years for research findings to make its way into clinical practices. If this research isn't being heavily influenced by those most impacted, the cycle of harm around ME and Long COVID will be perpetuated.

3 Ways To Be An Ally To People With Long COVID

(There are more than 3 ways, but this is a good place to start)

1. Wear a respirator in essential public spaces
2. Educate yourself on Long COVID, ME/CFS, and Disability
3. Donate your time and/or money to Long COVID advocacy groups and local mask blocs

Essays From People With Long COVID

The Sick Times has showcased a number of personal stories from folks with Long COVID. Felicity's and Nandini's are just two of the hundreds of millions of stories out there.

A quote from, "My partner and I both have Long COVID. We tread the underworld together."
by Felicity Nelson

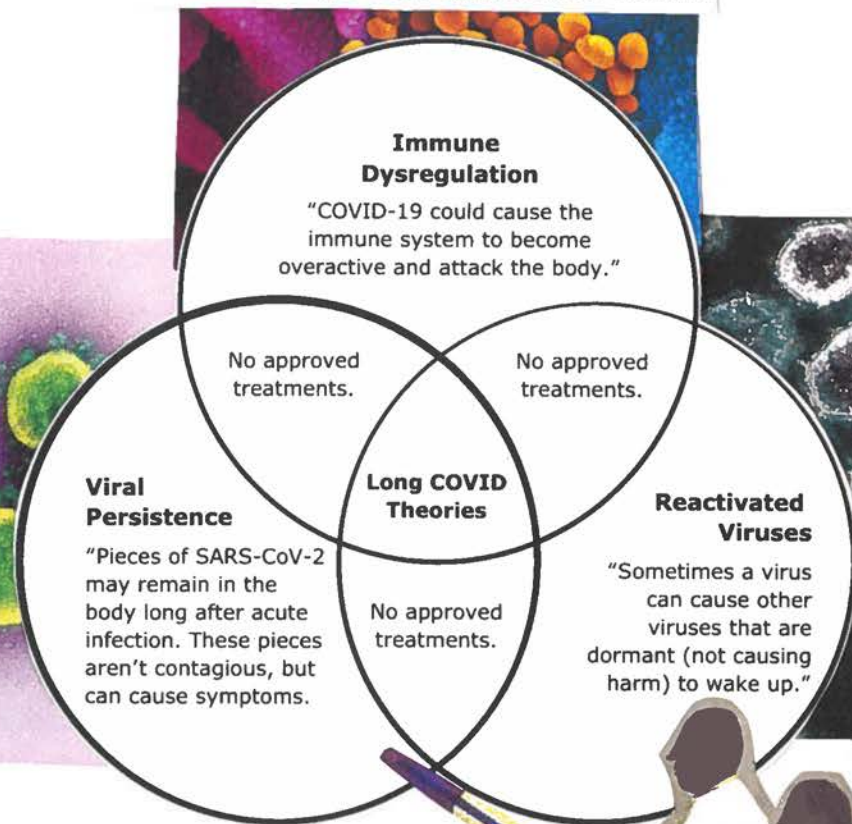
Many people with chronic illnesses like Long COVID and ME describe it like living in hell – science writer Felicity Nelson extended the metaphor by using the Greek myth of Orpheus to explore the underworld of chronic illness when both you and your partner have Long COVID. In the story, "Orpheus, a gifted poet and musician, travels to the underworld to rescue his newly wedded wife, Eurydice, who died after being bitten by a snake. They are both allowed to leave Hades under one condition: Eurydice must walk behind Orpheus, and he must not turn and look back at her on the way out. I told my partner this story late one night. He hadn't heard it before, but he saw the parallels with our story right away."

A quote from, "My daughter has Long COVID. It transformed me into an advocate for kids."
by Nandini Raj

"The more I connected with other families struggling to navigate our health system and support their children with Long COVID [affecting 4-6 million kids in the US, according to researchers], the angrier I got. For 15 years, I had worked and navigated the healthcare system as a professional in healthcare improvement and primary care. I redirected my anger into action by joining the newly-formed Long COVID Web, a national Canadian network supporting and conducting research in Long COVID. I was accepted to sit on the Patient Advisory Council, advocating for pediatric families."

Research Updates

Research on Long COVID is extensive, with dozens of papers on LC coming out weekly, some from leading HIV researchers. The three main theories of Long COVID that have emerged from this research include:



Keep in mind: There are other leading theories of Long COVID, and it may be a combination of some or all of these theories! Read more about it here! -->



CAUTION CAUTION CAUTION

Reinfections are further disabling
people with Long COVID!

-19 Test

C T

Research on COVID-19
reinfection has
shown that **40-80%**
of people who
have had a COVID
reinfection have
experienced
worsening
symptoms after
reinfection.

Dana Brown, who had already been living with myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME) before her first COVID infection, shared that her second infection triggered Mast Cell Activation Syndrome (MCAS) and new psychiatric symptoms that made her suicidal for a month, in addition to severe abdominal pain, migraines, and increased fatigue.

Should people with Long COVID be donating blood?

Researchers say no! The current science indicates that people with Long COVID or with ME/CFS should not donate blood or plasma. "Individuals with both ME/CFS and Long Covid probably have compromised red blood cell function," researcher Resia Pretorius said.

In the UK, the NHS^{*} has deferred people with Long COVID from donating blood until they are "fully recovered," a decision that has raised concerns among some LC advocates regarding the potential stigmatization of people living with LC. Longtime HIV advocate Gabriel San Emeterio comments: "Rather than allocating money for research or giving resources to people with Long COVID — [which they would do] if they really are concerned about the donor — they ban these people from donating...Hopefully, the people making these decisions going forward will realize that they also need messaging that helps combat the stigma [of Long COVID]."

* National Health Service