

# Long COVID definition – from payer perspective

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# Elevance Health

## Who we are?

Fueled by our bold purpose to improve the health of humanity, we are transforming from a traditional health benefits organization into a lifetime trusted health partner.

Our nearly 100,000 associates serve more than 118 million people, at every stage of health. We address a full range of needs with an integrated whole health approach, powered by industry-leading capabilities and a digital platform for health.

- Anthem Blue Cross and Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield plans in 14 Blue states
- Wellpoint plans (commercial, Medicare, Medicaid plans outside of 14 Blue states)
- Carelon – healthcare services

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# Motivation

- Many people experienced lingering symptoms after COVID infection
  - Estimating that between 10% and 25% of symptomatic patients experience symptoms persisting beyond the acute phase of illness <sup>1</sup>
  - A recent study from Elevance Health showed that patients with long covid are more likely to experience cardiovascular diseases and pulmonary events, and have higher mortality <sup>2</sup>
- Emerging need for providing timely and appropriate care for health plan members with long COVID
  - To maximize health outcomes
  - To manage healthcare utilization
  - To maintain labor participation

*In order achieve the above goals, we need to better identify members with long COVID in a timely manner using data that are readily available for a large population to payers*

1. Post-COVID conditions: information for healthcare providers. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Updated December 16, 2022. Accessed January 26, 2023. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/clinical-care/post-covid-conditions.html>



2. DeVries A, Shambhu S, Sloop S, Overhage JM. One-Year Adverse Outcomes Among US Adults With Post–COVID-19 Condition vs Those Without COVID-19 in a Large Commercial Insurance Database. *JAMA Health Forum*. 2023;4(3):e230010. doi:10.1001/jamahealthforum.2023.0010

# Challenges

- **Evolving clinical definition of long COVID**
  - What symptoms to include?
  - What timeline to look for?
  - How to differentiate symptoms resulted from COVID vs. underlying conditions?
- **Operationalize clinical definition using claims data**
  - Challenges in identifying COVID cases given (a) the wide availability of at-home testing and (b) better understanding and more available tools in self-managing COVID symptoms at home ⑦ make it challenging to pinpoint the date a person has COVID
  - Challenges in limited use of ICD-10 U09.9 code (“post-COVID-19 condition, unspecified”) due to that clinicians may not be familiarize with this new code nor have experiences or tool to identify long COVID cases
  - Incomplete medical history from some members, making it hard to tease out cases that are not long COVID but present with similar symptoms
  - Limited ability to differentiate severity of illness

# Considerations for long COVID definition from payer perspective

## Balance between sensitivity and specificity in clinical definitions

Allow stratification by severity of illness because interventions may vary by intensity (e.g. low touch vs. high touch)

## Operationalizable

The clinical definition of long COVID should be able to translate and operationalize in claims data

e.g. required information for long COVID definition is included in standardized claims extracts

## Consensus among providers

Need for consensus among provider community on long COVID definition and identification therefore providers would use relevant diagnosis codes for claims

