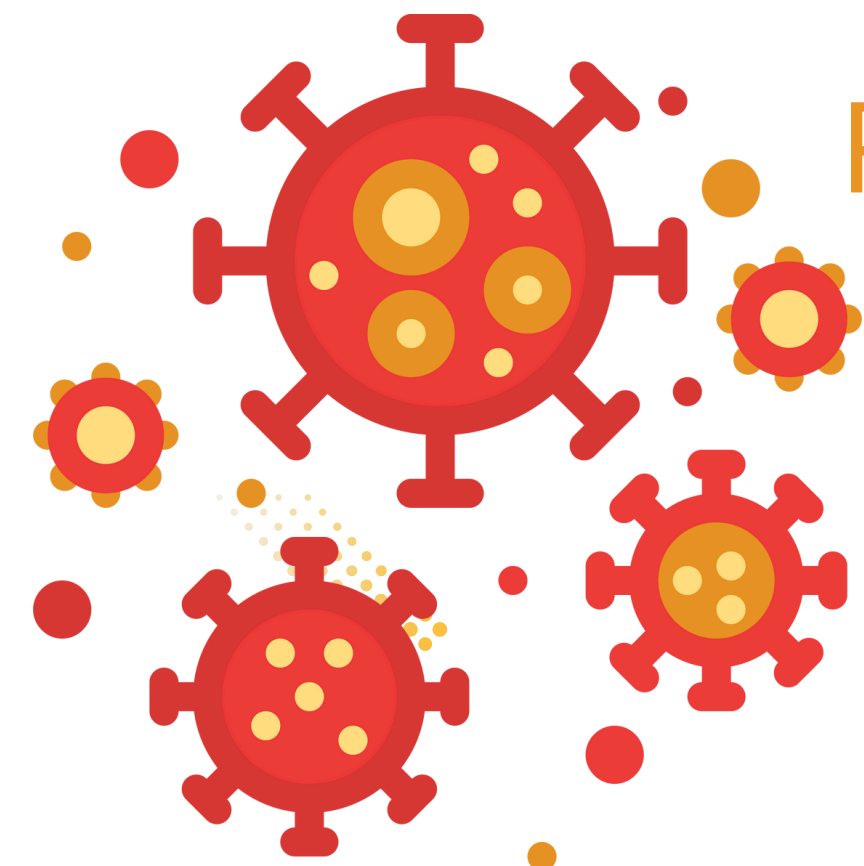


WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT COVID IN 2024:

A CONVERSATION FOR DV
AGENCIES, SOCIAL JUSTICE
PROFESSIONALS, ADVOCATES, AND
PREVENTIONISTS

Olivia Belknap and Erin Batali
MFT associates



Intention

A lot of the information presented today may be new for you, and some of it might be upsetting or stressful

You may experience feelings of anger, fear, anxiety, sadness, defensiveness

Notice what's coming up for you and acknowledge it without judgement

Notice how your nervous system is responding, and do what you need to do to regulate so you can stay engaged

The goal is not to **do anything differently right now** – just to stay open and listen

Curiosity

What feelings come up when you consider the possibility that the COVID pandemic never ended?

The possibility that COVID is worse than many of us thought?

The possibility that the impacts of COVID are not going away?

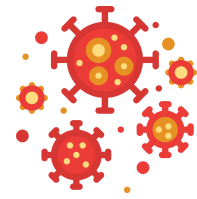
If you used to wear a mask in public and no longer do, why?

What do you know about how the COVID virus has changed over time?

What may be preventing you from considering you might be wrong (or at least missing something) in calculating the risk/negative effects of COVID?

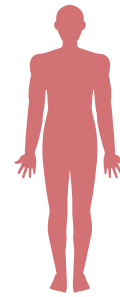
WHAT'S IN THIS PRESENTATION

01



WHAT IS COVID?

03



IMPACT ON THE BODY

05



RELATIONSHIP IMPLICATIONS

02



IMPACT ON
THE BRAIN

04

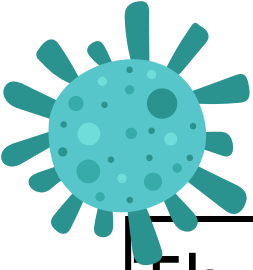


SOCIAL JUSTICE
CONCERNS

06



ADVOCACY &
RESOURCES



MISCONCEPTIONS

NOW WE KNOW...

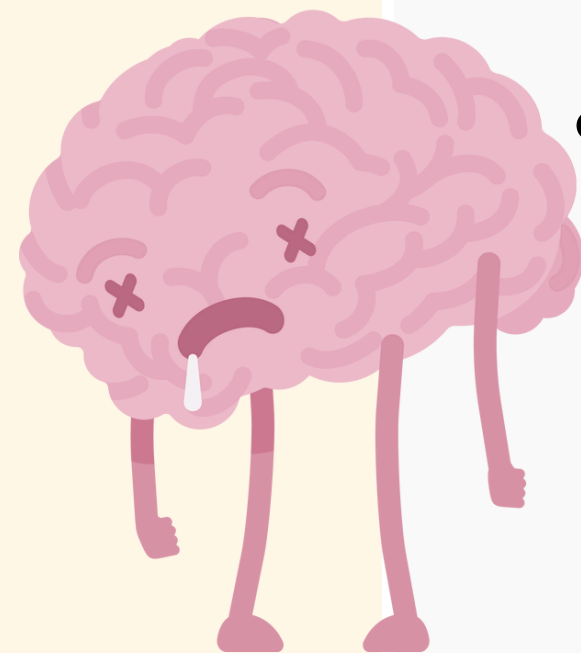
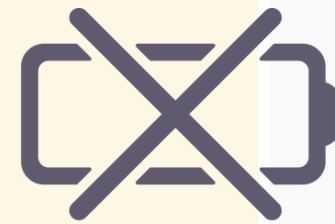
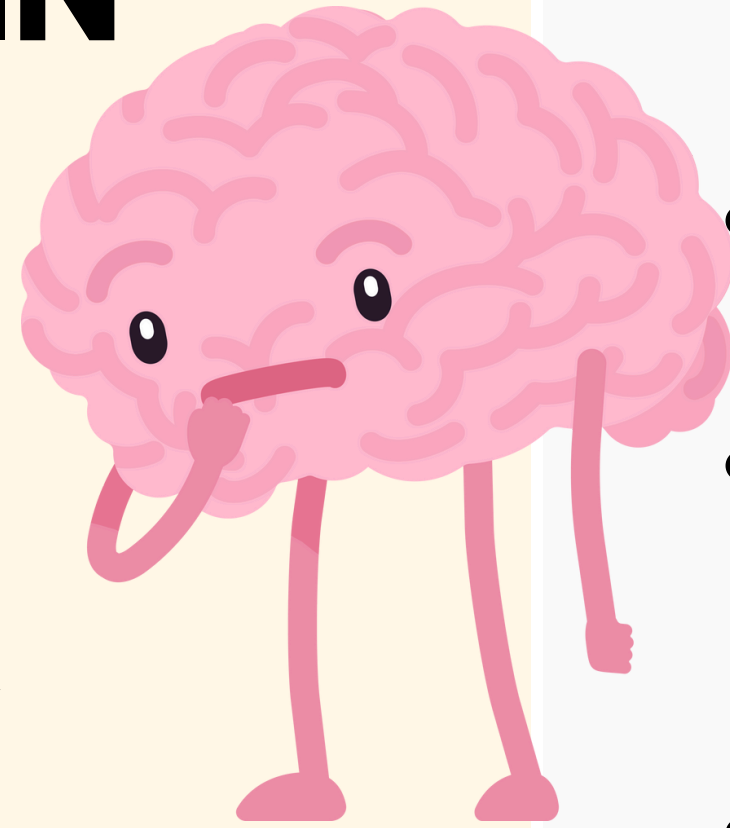
The pandemic is over	The public emergency has ended
“It’s just a cold now”/“It’s mild”	Leads to significant long term health problems
Spread through droplets	Airborne, can hang in the air for hours
Masks don’t work	N95s are best protection
Vaccines are all we need to be protected from infection, Or “Vaccines don’t work”	Vaccines reduce rates of death, hospitalization, and infection. Important to get boosters. Best used alongside other safety measures.
Only X people are impacted	Anyone can get long COVID
You can only get COVID once	There is no limit to the number of times you can get COVID; damage is cumulative; no lasting immunity
Only spreads indoors	Outdoor spread
Only need to isolate for 1-5 days	Continue isolating if symptomatic or testing positive
“I don’t have symptoms so I don’t have COVID”	Up to 50% of COVID spread is from asymptomatic or presymptomatic infections



COVID & THE BRAIN

Davis et al., 2023; Nouraeinejad, 2023; Rouquette et al., 2023

- **Neuro-invasive**
- Memory loss
- Paresthesia
- Dizziness and balance issues
- Sensitivity to light and noise
- Loss of (or phantom) smell or taste
- Autonomic dysfunction
- Depression and anxiety
- Insomnia
- Increased suicide risk
- **Increased risks** of cognitive impairment (brain fog), seizures, dementia, psychosis, and other **neuro-cognitive conditions continued for at least 2 years**
- **Overall reduction in brain size**



- **Similar rates in hospitalized and non-hospitalized patients**
- Neurological symptoms often have a **delayed onset** of weeks to months, and can **worsen over time**
- Lack of concentration, difficulty in understanding instruction, and difficulty in processing information, short-term memory problems
 - may appear similar to ADHD
- A subset of those with cognitive impairment **may not know and/or report their impairment**

LONG COVID

“Experiencing symptoms within three months from the initial infection that last at least two months” Pollock et al 2023

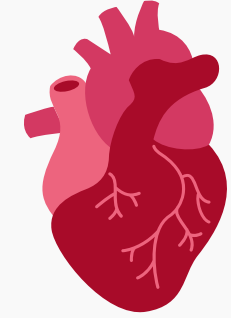
- Affects 20-30% of all patients (50% of hospitalized patients)
- Most long COVID cases are in non-hospitalized patients with a mild acute illness
- Over 200+ potential symptoms American Medical Association
- LC pathophysiology includes: **immune dysregulation and autoimmunity, pathogen persistence/reactivation, neurological abnormalities and neuroinflammation, tissue and organ damage, hypoperfusion and autonomic dysfunction, fibrin amyloid microclots, and microbiome dysregulation**

“We should not be thinking about long COVID as something that happens to certain groups of people. It can affect anyone of all ages.” Weiss (2023)

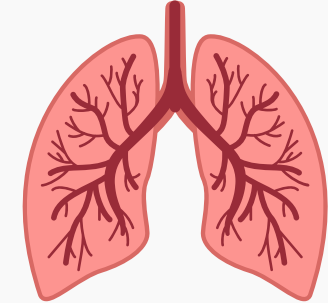
NEUROLOGICAL



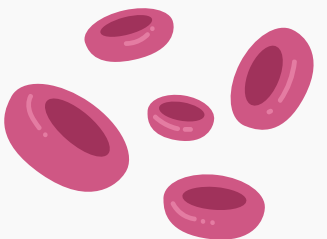
HEART



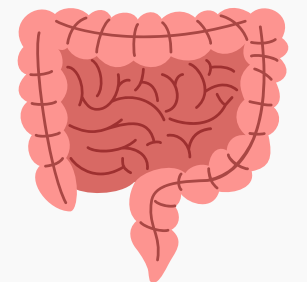
LUNGS



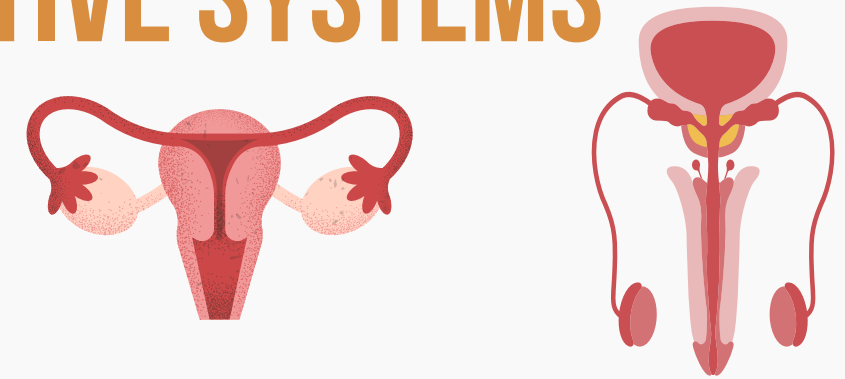
IMMUNE SYSTEM



GASTROINTESTINAL



REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEMS



LONG COVID

- **Myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS)**
 - Neuroimmune illness characterized by intolerance to systemic exertion and chronic fatigue that cannot be alleviated via rest
 - 58.7% met the criteria for ME/CFS
- **Respiratory:** cough, breathing difficulty
- **Gastrointestinal:** heartburn, gastrointestinal disorders, constipation, loss of appetite, and abdominal pain
- COVID-19 is capable of inducing multiple systemic and organic lesions
 - 70% of individuals with long COVID exhibited evidence of damage to at least one organ
 - Multiorgan damage: renal, thrombotic, cardiac, and pulmonary functions
- **Pancreas:** pancreatitis, diabetes, pancreatic exocrine dysfunction
- **Musculoskeletal:** musculoskeletal pain, sarcopenia and decreased skeletal muscle mass

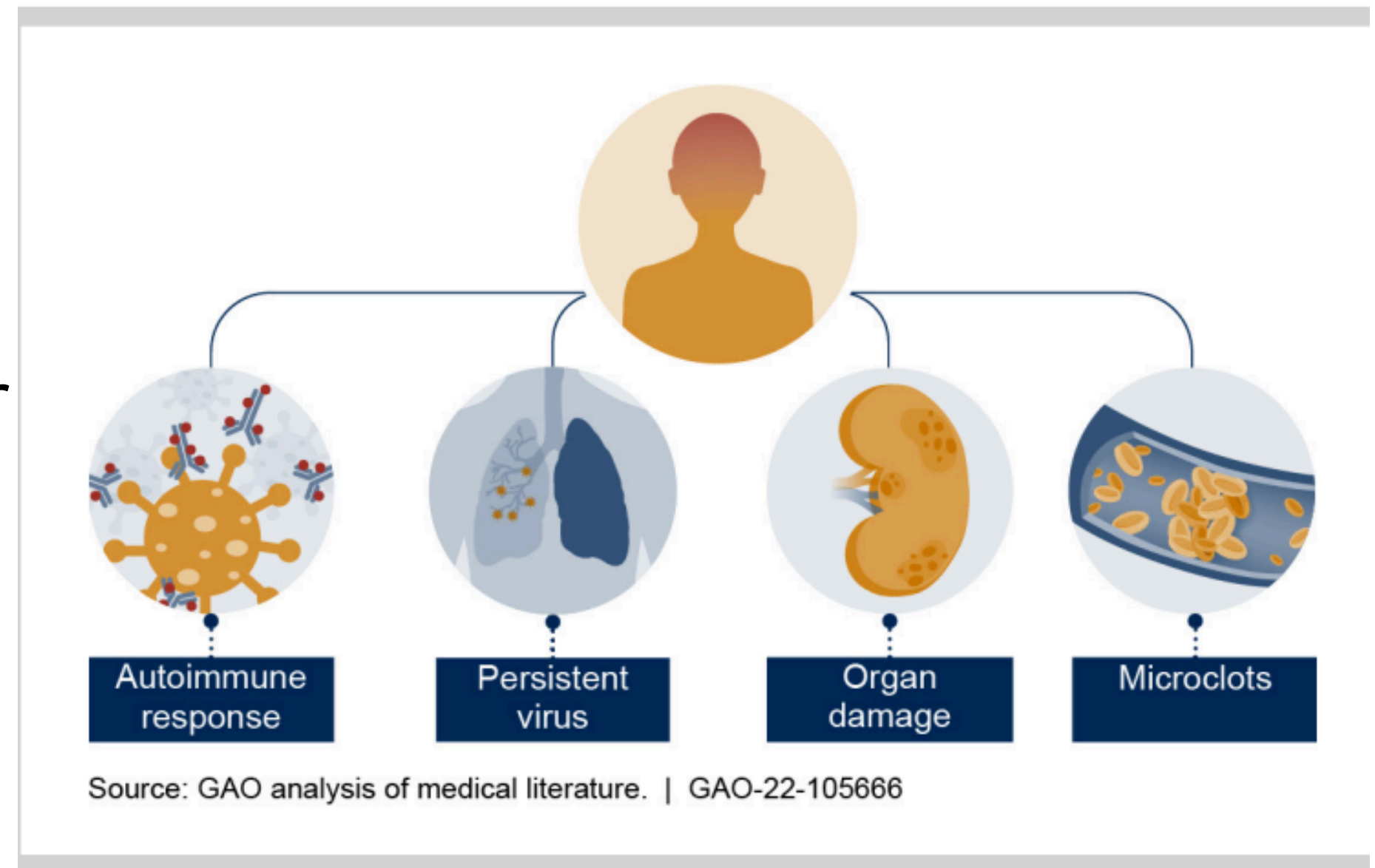
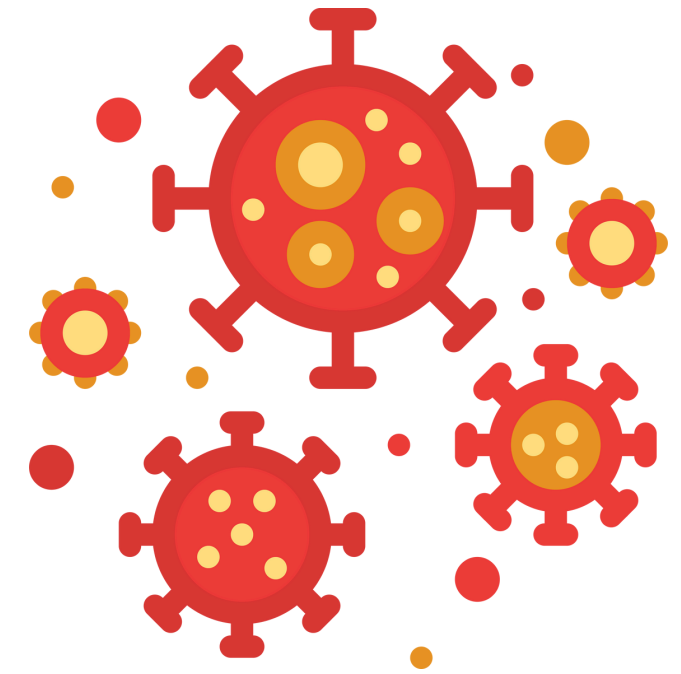
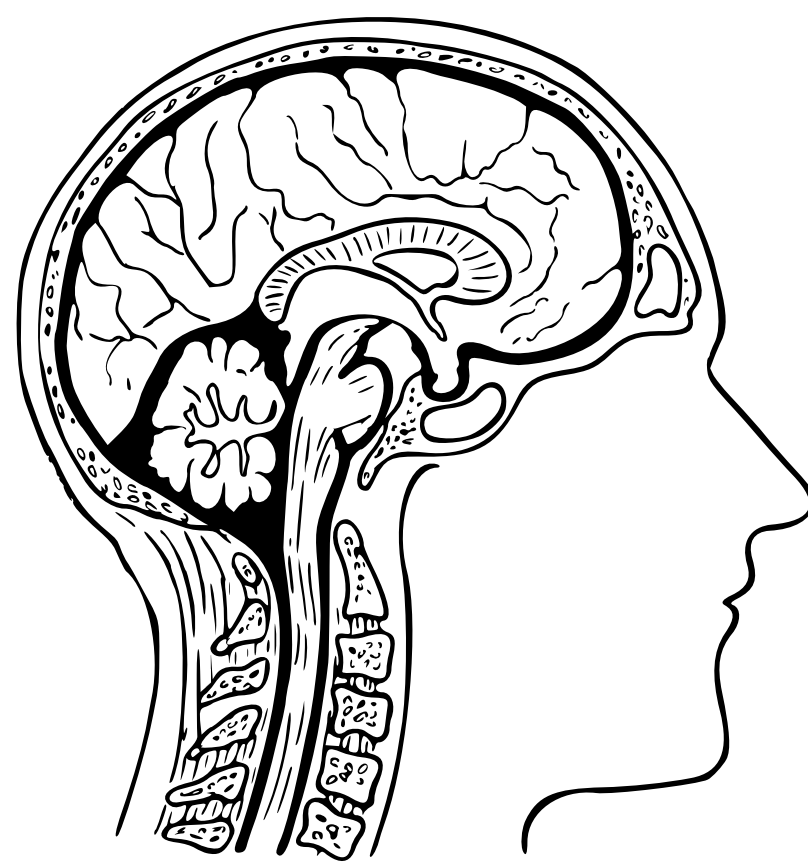
Davis et al., 2021; Demoliou et al., 2022; Donders et al., 2022; Dorobisz et al., 2023; Li et al., 2023; Polly & Fernandez, 2022; Ripa et al., 2022; Seyfi et al., 2022

Other symptoms

- Hair loss
- Tooth loss
- Skin problems
 - blisters, rash, “COVID toes”
- Immune dysregulation
 - Lymphopenia
- New cancers
- Vision & hearing loss
- Blood clots
 - heart attack, stroke, pulmonary embolisms
- Inflammation
- Anaphylaxis and new allergies
- Changes in sensitivity to medication
- Seizures
- Facial paralysis
- Sleep issues
- Autoimmune disorders

POTENTIAL CAUSES OF LONG COVID

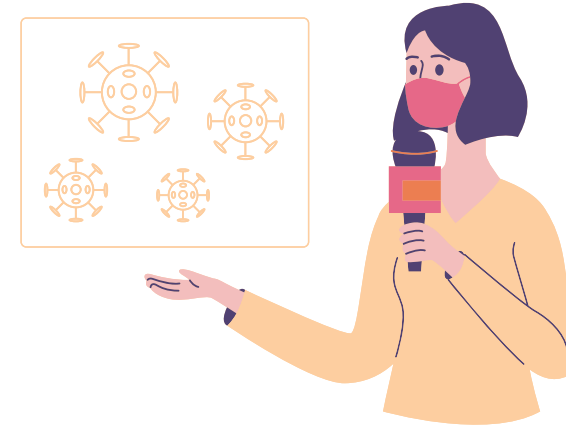
- Inflammation, neuroinflammation & autoimmunity
- Reduced serotonin
 - Vagus nerve dysfunction
- Autonomic dysfunction
- Virus crossing blood-brain barrier
- Viral persistence
- Organ and tissue damage
- Microclots



LONG COVID

Who is high risk?

According to the CDC



- “People from racial and ethnic minority groups”
- Pregnant people
- Infants
- Adults 65+
- Disabilities: Autism, ADHD, learning disorders, Down syndrome, & more
- Cancer
- Asthma
- Immunocompromised
- Connective tissue disorders (hEDS)
- Mental health conditions: mood disorders
- Current/former smoker
- Substance use disorders
- Stroke
- Heart Conditions
- HIV
- Diabetes
- Autoimmune diseases
- Chronic kidney/liver/lung disease
- Mast Cell Activation Syndrome (MCAS)
- and MORE

- **75.4% of U.S. adults had at least one increased-risk condition**
- **40.3% ≥ 2 conditions**
- **18.5% ≥ 3 conditions**

(data from 2021)

Ajufo et al. 2021

Psychiatric disorders are associated with increased risk for being hospitalized and/or having subsequent health complications from COVID

Schultebrucks et al. 2023

LONG COVID

- Risk increases with each subsequent COVID infection

Bowe et al., 2022



- There are no proven effective treatments for LC, partly due to no identifiable cause

Highleyman, 2023

- LC is associated with preexisting psychiatric disorders, post-infection psychiatric disorders, and suicide risk

Gasnier et al. 2023

- Symptoms can last weeks, months or years. Some conditions will be lifelong. Symptoms may remit and then return.

CDC



Between 10-30% of those who have had COVID will develop Long COVID

(Some studies show higher rates)

Pause

How is your body reacting to this information?

What do you need to regulate your nervous system?

SOCIAL JUSTICE CONSIDERATIONS



- **Disproportionately impacts BIPOC folks, women, LGBTQ+, low income & disabled people**
- Accessing medical care
 - Ending the state of emergency removed social supports
 - Private companies increasing cost of treatments
 - Private resources shutting down
 - Patient gaslighting from the medical system
- **Ableism:** “set of beliefs or practices that devalue and discriminate against people with physical, intellectual, or psychiatric disabilities and often rests on the assumption that disabled people need to be ‘fixed’ in one form or the other” Smith (2023)

“The more people perceived there to be racial disparities, the less fearful they were of COVID-19, and the less they supported safety precautions to prevent the spread” (NPR)

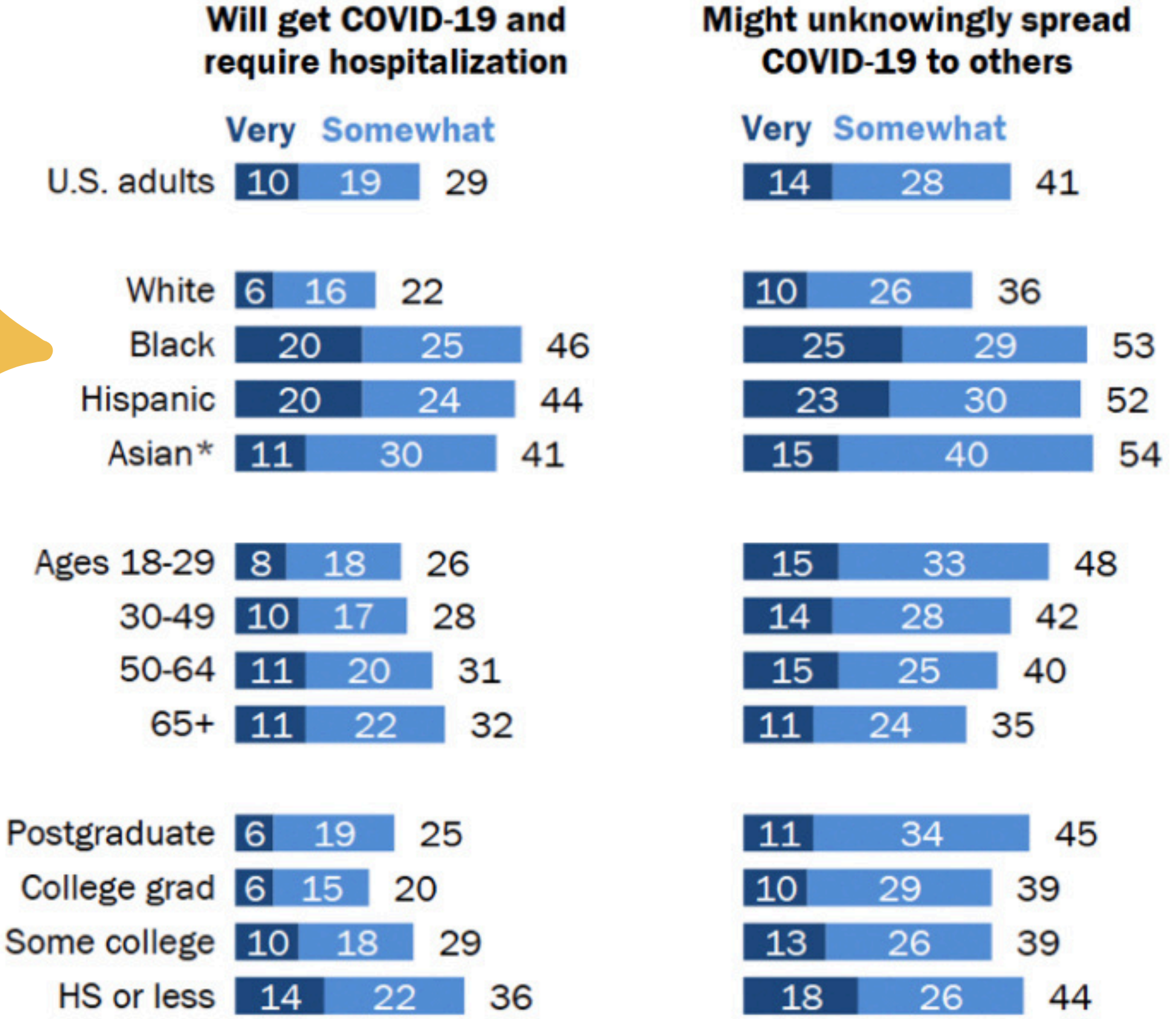
SOCIAL JUSTICE CONSIDERATIONS

White people are less concerned about getting COVID and spreading it to others



Those with lower incomes express more concern about getting a serious case of COVID-19

% of U.S. adults who say they are ___ concerned that they ...



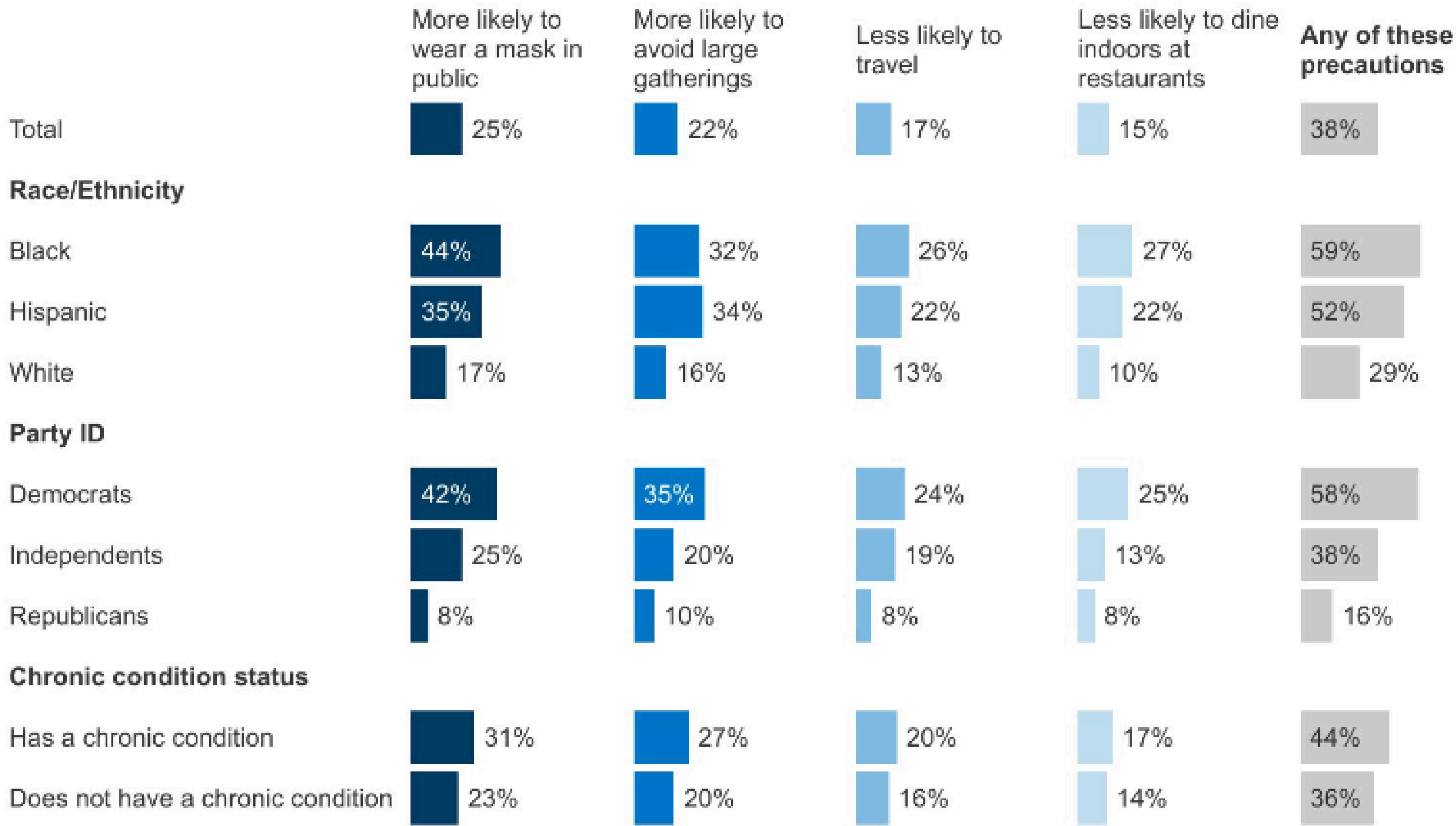
SOCIAL JUSTICE CONSIDERATIONS

White people are significantly less likely to take COVID precautions



Figure 21
 About Four In Ten Say They Have Taken Recent Precautions Because Of Increases Of COVID-19

Percent who say the news of increases of COVID-19 made them...



NOTE: Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race but are categorized as Hispanic for this analysis; other groups are non-Hispanic. See topline for full question wording.

SOURCE: KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor (Sept. 6-13, 2023)

SOCIAL JUSTICE CONSIDERATIONS



COVID is a workers rights issue

- “Public facing industries, including teaching and education, social care, healthcare, civil service, retail and transport industries and occupations, had the highest likelihood of long-COVID” Kromydas et al., 2023
 - 11.6% (teaching and education)
 - Prevalence of reduced function by ‘a lot’
 - 22%–23% (teaching and education)
- “Around 16 million working-age Americans (those aged 18 to 65) have long Covid today” CDC 2022
 - **2 -4 million are out of work due to long Covid**
 - **Consider the impact of worker shortages on various industries:** teaching, healthcare, pilots, etc

- **Paid sick leave**
- **Childcare**
- **Healthcare**
- **Protective equipment**
- **Disability accommodations**
- **Who is liable for infection?**

SOCIAL JUSTICE & COMMUNITY CARE

“When I am in public spaces and see most people unmasked either because they think the virus is a hoax, that masking is virtue signaling and a sign of weakness, aren't thinking about it, or that they simply don't care, **I feel like an expendable burden not worth saving**” -Alice Wong

“The psychological toll of trying to keep ourselves safe with no institutional support, and, in fact, quite a bit of institutional propaganda that we are being hysterical, is an **ongoing source of trauma**. It feels like I'm screaming into the void.” -Angela Meriquez Vázquez

Wong 2024



“Being chronically ill right now means navigating systems with constant reminders of how little the people in those systems value you. We emotionally support each other when the world seems to want to forget that we exist.”

-Kimberly Vered Shashoua, LCSW
COVID-conscious therapist

LGBTQ+ ISSUES:

Demographics of long COVID in the US:

- 13.5% cisgender men
- 21.8% cisgender women
- 26.3% of trans adults
- 16.8% of straight adults
- 18.7% of gay and lesbian adults
- 28.4% of bisexual adults CDC 2024



“Of course [trans people] have higher rates of long COVID. We have lower rates of being treated as humans. People who are denied access to health care, resources, or bodily safety are at higher risk of ill health outcomes, including this massive disabling event known as long COVID.” JD Davids

“Allowing COVID to proliferate is going to continue to worsen health disparities... particularly in a country where in some places, it's literally illegal to give appropriate health care to trans people.” JD Davids



Long COVID Kids



Signs of Long Covid often look different in kids vs adults

tired after school or activities

behavioral issues

drop in grades or school performance

food avoidance

uninterested in play or activities

sensory issues

Rao et al.,
2024

Neurological

Symptoms

- Headache
- Paresthesia
- Dizziness
- Vertigo
- Tremulousness

Conditions

- POTS
- Orthostatic intolerance
- Dysautonomia
- Pediatric acute-onset psychiatric syndrome

Mental Health/Behavioral

Symptoms

- Decreased school performance
- Brain fog/cognitive difficulties
- Low mood
- Difficulty with concentration
- Memory problems
- Suicidal behavior
- Irritability
- Impulsivity
- Somatization
- Emotional lability

Conditions

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Posttraumatic stress disorder
- Stress and adjustment disorders
- Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder
- Eating disorders

Constitutional

Symptoms

- Fatigue
- Sleep disturbance
- Fever
- Malaise
- Weakness
- Generalized pain
- Post exertional malaise
- Somnolence

Conditions

- ME/CFS

Respiratory

Symptoms

- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Chest tightness
- Cough
- Exercise intolerance

Otolaryngology

Symptoms

- Chronic rhinorrhea
- Nasal congestion

Conditions

- Abnormal smell or taste
- Loss of smell or taste
- Paradoxical vocal cord motion dysfunction

GI

Symptoms

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Diarrhea/constipation
- Weight loss
- Loss of appetite

Cardiovascular

Symptoms

- Palpitations
- Tachycardia
- Syncope
- Dizziness
- Chest Pain
- Exercise intolerance

Conditions

- POTS
- Myocarditis
- Arrhythmias
- Conduction abnormalities

Reproductive

Symptoms

- Irregular periods

Hematological

Conditions

- Leucopenia
- Thrombocytopenia
- Hypercoagulability
- Thromboembolism
- Mastocytosis
- Mast cell activation syndrome

Musculoskeletal

Symptoms

- Weakness
- Myalgia
- Arthralgia

Conditions

- Myositis

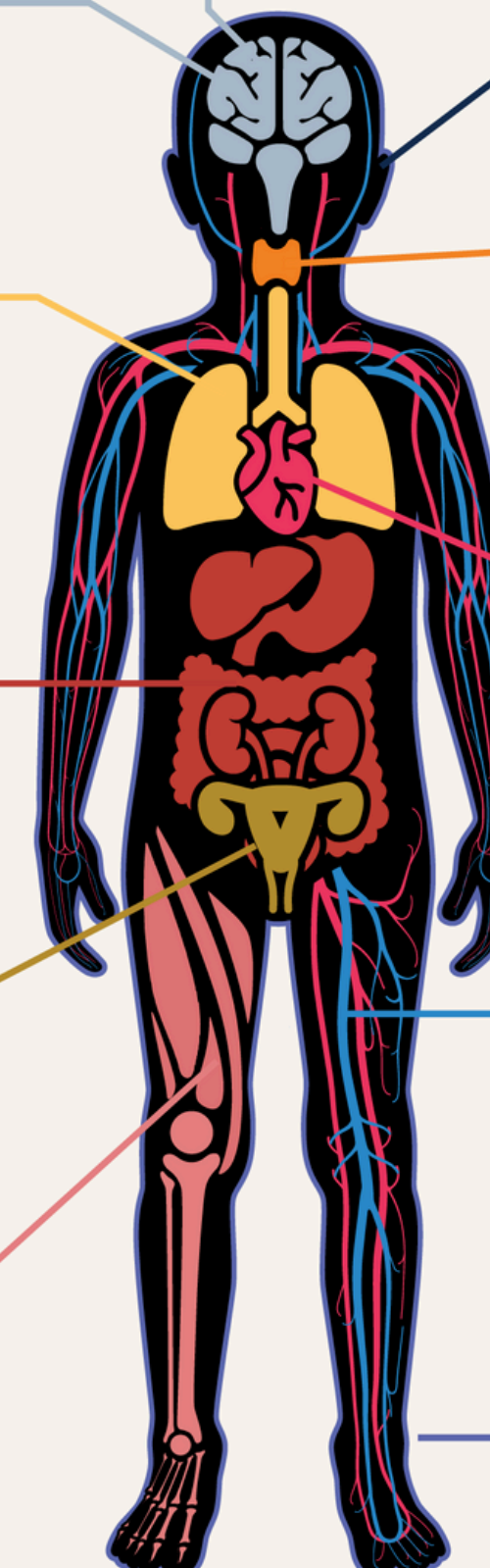
Dermatologic

Symptoms

- Hair loss
- Rashes

Conditions

- COVID digits
- Aphthous ulcers



Pause

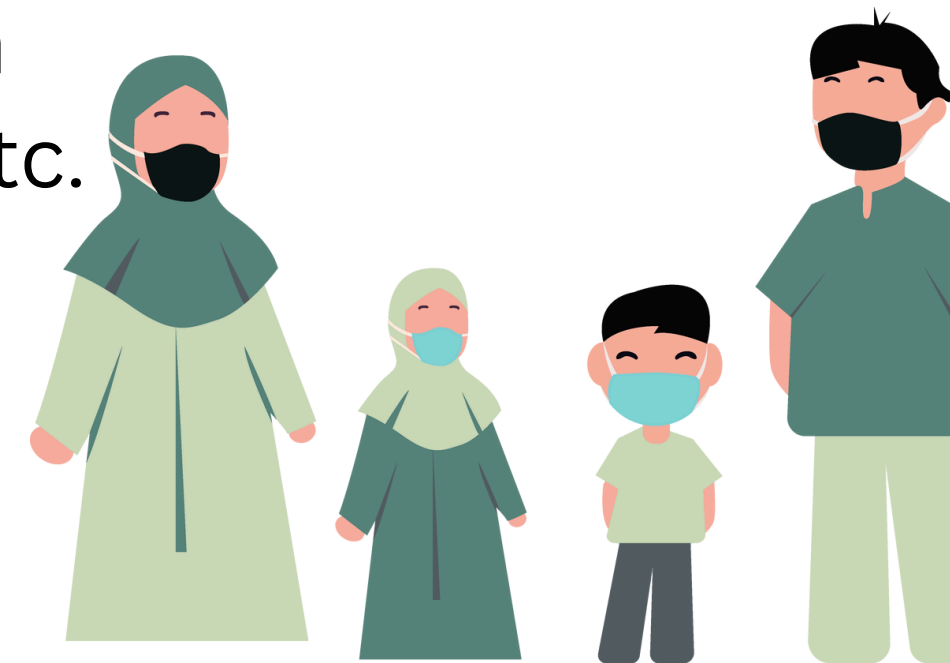
How is your body reacting to this information?

What do you need to regulate your nervous system?

Couples & Relationships

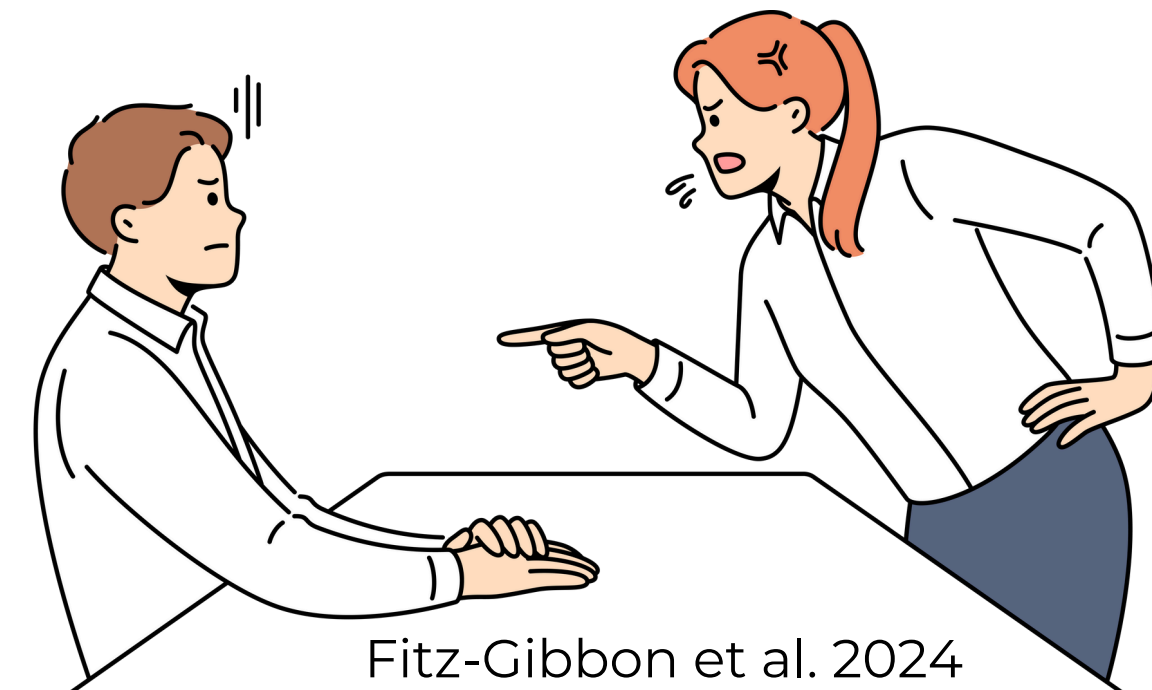


- **Varying levels of precaution:** “34% of US adults reported **conflict with their partners related to their COVID-19 health concerns** or the continuing [prevention measures]”
 - “Three year relationship that I thought would be life long ended over different levels of precaution” -@BeGillz
 - “It doesn’t help when your in-laws don’t believe in precautions either and causes tension indirectly” -@KayleighsCreat1
 - “They started engaging in high risk behavior and lied to me about them”-@TitheGirl
 - “It is absolutely an issue for couples. And parents. And children with siblings who aren’t approaching the pandemic in a similar fashion, etc. **When you share AIR and everything that comes with it, individual actions have collective consequences. It’s TOUGH**” -@kadamssl (Therapist)



Couples & Relationships

- **Intimate Partner Violence:** “Partners weaponized [the patient’s] long Covid symptoms to further perpetrate abusive and controlling behaviours.”
 - “**too unwell to even consider leaving** their abusive partner”
 - “my bf isn’t masking anywhere or taking any precautions even though I’m immunocompromised. **I can’t afford to leave so I just kinda have to pretend to be okay with it**” -@freglyleftfoot
- **Changing relationship/family dynamics** due to health issues
 - What happens when one member of the couple is no longer able to perform the care duties they used to?
 - Personality changes or increased anger/aggression
 - Lost income due to health issues
 - Loss of sexual functioning
 - Partners becoming a caregiver unexpectedly

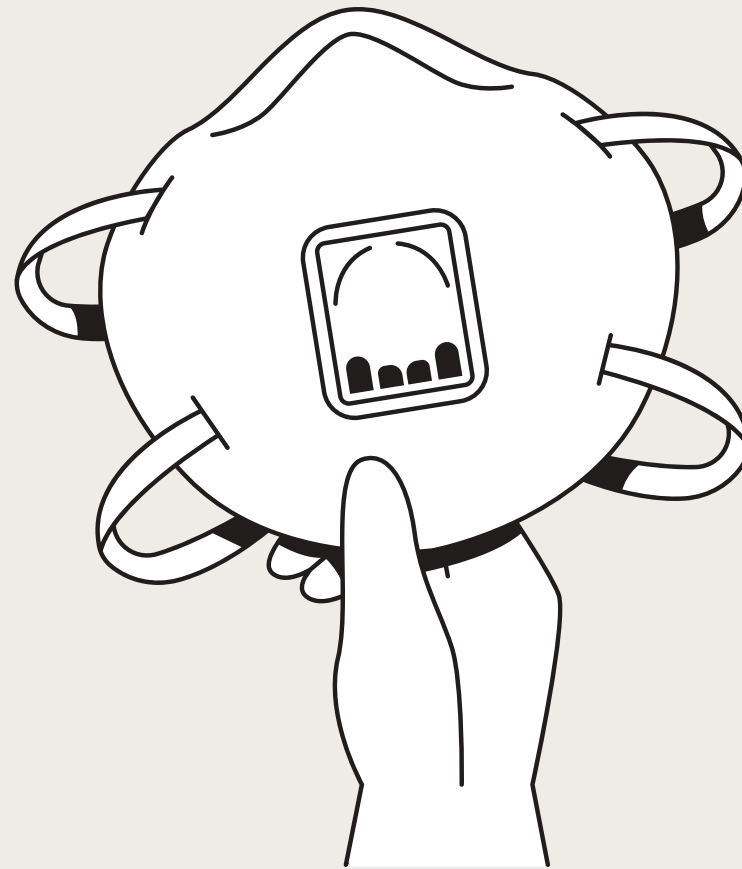


COVID PROTECTION

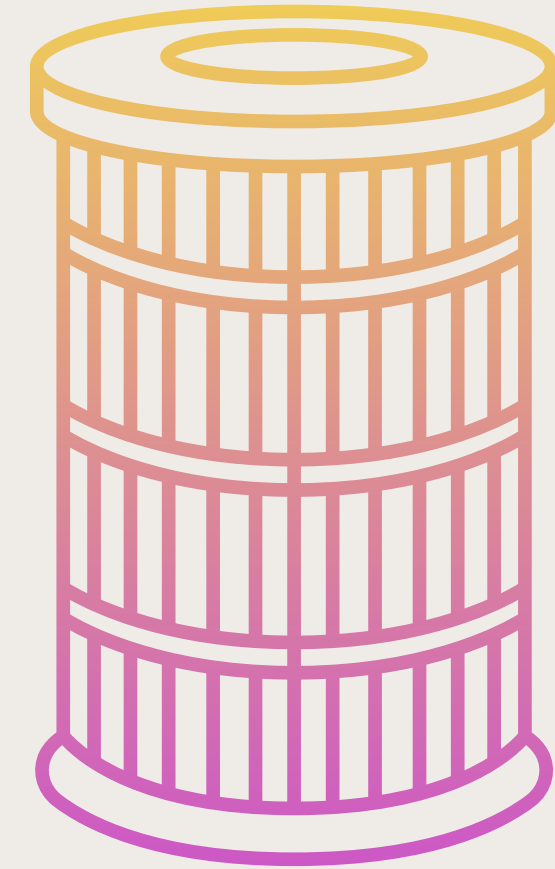
How to make spaces safer and more accessible to all



Telehealth



Masks/respirators



Clean air

What can I do?

ADVOCACY, HARM REDUCTION & COMMUNITY CARE



Mask bloc-
<https://maskbloc.org/>



KN95 or better for optimal
protection



Advocate within your
community spaces

Resources

INFORMATION

- [What to do if you have COVID](#)
- [Risk status questionnaire](#)
- [What is Long COVID](#)
- [Up-to-date research articles](#)
- [Long COVID Families support](#)
- [People's CDC: Evidence-based updates](#)
- [CDC wastewater data](#)
- [COVID Safety 101](#)



COVID PREVENTION & CARE

- [Quality masks \(1\)](#)
- [Quality masks \(2\)](#)
- [Mask Bloc Finder](#)



COMMUNITY CARE

- [Long COVID support groups](#)
- [COVID advocacy groups directory](#)
- [COVID-conscious therapists list](#)
- [Covid Isn't Over/Still Coving](#)
- ["Why should I care?" FAQ](#)
- [Community Events \(LGBTQ+, BIPOC\)](#)

Discussion

What feelings came up for you?

What's something new you've learned today?

How will you implement what you've learned today in your own life—either personally or in your professional practice?

Do you have any questions?

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