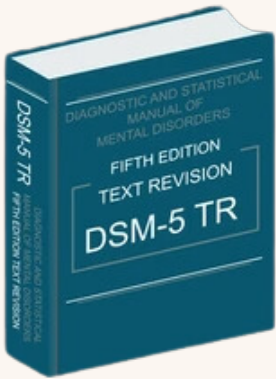


Covid Safety Isn't an Anxiety Disorder:

Why Health Care Professionals should avoid pathologizing Covid precautions



What we know about fear & anxiety

- In the DSM-5 TR, Criteria D for a diagnosis of “Specific Phobia” states “the fear or anxiety is out of proportion to the actual danger posed by the specific object or situation and to the sociocultural context.”
- We know that “anxiety and fear responses are necessary components of adaptive behavior” (Ahmari et al., 2009).
- So what about those who have fears about Covid?

What we know about Covid & Long Covid

- 75.4% of U.S. adults had at least one increased-risk condition, 40.3% had at least two, and 18.5% had three or more conditions ([Ajufo et al., 2021](#)).
- CDC defines high-risk populations: “racial and ethnic minority groups,” pregnant people, infants, age 65+, developmental disabilities, mood disorders, diabetes, asthma, autoimmune diseases, & more
 - CDC says: symptoms can last weeks, months, years or be lifelong
- American Medical Association: 20-30% of patients will develop Long Covid
 - 200+ potential symptoms, across all organ systems
- Risk increases with each infection ([Bowe et al., 2022](#)).
- 70% of individuals with long COVID exhibited evidence of damage to at least one organ ([Li et al., 2023](#)).
- Covid is still a novel virus, and while we know a lot about the harm it can cause, there are likely many health problems that may take years to come to light, much like HIV and AIDS.



Putting it all together

- With all that we know about Covid, the harm it can cause, and the potential for many negative long term health outcomes, it is very reasonable to take steps to avoid infection. The best way to prevent long Covid is to prevent infection in the first place.
- Taking safety precautions like wearing masks, avoiding large gatherings, and limiting time in indoor spaces are all rational choices that are proportional to the dangers of a Covid infection.
- We would never deter someone from wearing their seatbelt or helmet, applying sunscreen, or using condoms. Covid safety measures are no different than these other precautions many of us use on a daily basis.
- You can help support patients by wearing an N95 mask, and adding air filters to help clean the air of viruses. (Bonus: these measures keep you safer too!)

