

Rehabilitation Approach

Slide 1

Rehabilitation Approach. Building a strong therapeutic relationship with those living with Long COVID is essential to effective rehabilitation. World Physiotherapy highlights part of doing this is to ensure that individuals are validated in their experiences and their rehabilitation is safe and personalised.

Slide 2

Prior to commencing any physical therapy individuals should be screened for Post exertional symptom exacerbation

Their baseline exercise tolerance should also be assessed by monitoring the individuals heart rate, blood pressure, oxygen saturation and asking if during exercise they experience any orthostatic intolerances.

Slide 3

If an individual is identified as having post exertional symptom exacerbation current guidelines suggest that physiotherapists advise:

Stop, resting and pacing physical daily activities and encourage pacing, planning, and prioritising of physical daily activities.

Home monitoring is also encouraged in guidelines, of heart rate and blood pressure to monitor exertion during and in the days following physical activity.

Slide 4 –

Physical therapy considerations for all those living with Long COVID are

To progress cautiously. Remembering a patient's symptoms can change quickly
Monitor patients appropriately. Remember symptoms can fluctuate; current symptoms can progress, and new symptoms can occur.

Provide education to prevent exacerbation and oxygen desaturation during physical activity

Safety net patients. Make sure they know who, when and how to contact if symptoms progress

Aim for symptom stability. Make sure that fluctuations are manageable for patients.

And finally remembering physical activity and physical exercise are not the same. Physical activity should gradually increase to include exercise therapy

Slide 5

Respiratory concerns can be addressed using respiratory physiotherapy skills such as breathlessness management and positions of ease.

However, if a patient presents with what appears to be a dysfunctional breathing technique refer them on to a specialist dysfunctional breathing service.

Slide 6

As physiotherapists we need to assist those living with long covid by educating them about pacing to prevent exacerbation and oxygen desaturation during physical activity.

In addition to this we need to direct to peer support networks, such as online forums.

Inform them how and when to access other members of the multi-disciplined team

Act as a signpost to other support networks such as social care, employment and housing.

We also need to advise and provide resources to assist information sharing with friends and family, to encourage a strong support network at home.

Slide 7

It is really important that for this patient group that we listen, understand and empathise with their situation as they may be used to not being believed and dismissed

It is also important that we have an holistic approach and see physiotherapy as one piece of the jigsaw

Finally, it is incredibly important to work with the individual to set realistic goals.

Making sure that their expectations and what is achievable are in line.