

Knowhow



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Making sense of commonly misunderstood subjects

Health

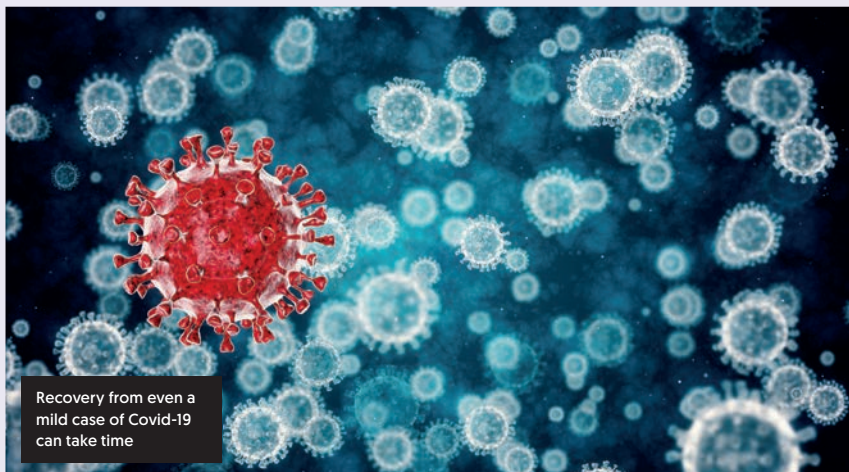
I've had mild Covid-19. When can I get back on my bike?

For the majority of people this infection is mild and self-limiting. Common symptoms include a cough, fevers, muscle aches, and lethargy.

Many people lose their sense of taste or smell. Some people experience breathlessness. In more severe cases breathing difficulties lead to a hospital visit for oxygen treatment or further respiratory support. Most will make a full recovery but it may take weeks. It is recognised that during the acute illness everybody loses fitness and strength and will need to be patient while recovering.

Guidance suggests that, if you have been symptom free for seven days after a mild infection, you can gradually start to resume your activities without any special medical tests. For the first two weeks, keep exertion to a minimal level as you may find you are still relatively short of breath and easily fatigued.

Guidance is given on the NHS site (yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk), suggesting muscle stretches, breathing exercises, and increasing levels of normal daily activities. Gently pedalling on an exercise bike for a few minutes would be a useful guide to see if you are ready to get back on your bike. After two weeks, if you are coping with gentle exercise,



Recovery from even a mild case of Covid-19 can take time

Left: Alamy

you can start to increase the length and strenuousness of your sessions.

You might try a short ride with two five-minute intervals of moderate effort and five minutes of rest in between. If all goes well you can gradually increase the number of intervals and hence the length of the session.

Signs you are overdoing it would be difficulty getting your breath back, muscle pains, feeling faint, or profound fatigue after the session. Reduce the intensity and be patient.

If all goes well, and once you can manage a 30-minute session, you can resume normal training – but consider a rest day for every two days of training to allow proper recovery. If you are pushing yourself moderately and are not unduly tired after, you are on the road back to fitness. You can start to look at goals that reach your normal level of cycling achievement. ●

Should I talk to my GP?

If your acute illness caused you to have chest pains, an irregular heart beat, or extreme breathlessness, this may be a sign of heart or lung damage from Covid-19. It would be wise to have a consultation and perhaps an ECG before starting anything strenuous due to the risk of heart muscle damage. (This will only apply to a small proportion of sufferers.)

If you are unable to progress because of recurring symptoms after a six-week period of waiting for recovery, then you should ask for help. Covid can also cause psychological damage so if you find you are struggling with anxiety or low mood, this too merits help.

Recovery step by step

Five stages of recovery, after seven days symptom free. Each stage should last at least seven days

<p>1</p> <p>Preparation for exercise Stretches, gentle walking, and activities of daily life</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Low intensity activities Walking outside, cycling indoors or on a flattish route for a few minutes</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Moderate intensity cycling Gradually increasing from 5 mins up to 30 mins, with rest periods</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Harder cycling sessions With a rest day after two of riding. Pay attention to fatigue levels</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Normal cycling levels Heavy exertion tolerated and minimal recovery time required</p>
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Covid case studies

Read about Cycling UK members' Covid-19 experiences at cyclinguk.org/long-covid