

What are Post-Acute Infection Syndromes (PAIS)?

Post-Acute Infection Syndromes (PAIS) are long-term or chronic illnesses that develop after an infection, such as a viral or bacterial infection. The original infection may still be present in the body, but this is not always the case. Many PAIS are named after the initial infection, for example:

- Long COVID / Post-COVID
- Chronic Lyme disease
- Q-fever fatigue syndrome
- Post-Legionella syndrome

Other PAIS, such as **ME/CFS** or **Post-Sepsis Syndrome**, can be triggered by different types of infections. PAIS are **multisystem illnesses**.

Multiple systems in the body are affected, such as the immune system and the nervous system. The severity differs per person.

Symptoms common to multiple PAIS

People with PAIS may experience:

- Severe fatigue and exhaustion
- Becoming more ill after physical or mental exertion (post-exertional malaise, PEM)
- Problems with thinking, memory, and concentration
- Pain (joint pain, muscle pain, nerve pain, headaches)
- Symptoms when standing or sitting upright (orthostatic intolerance)
- Sleep problems and waking up unrefreshed
- Sensitivity to stimuli (light, sound, smell, touch)
- Nausea and gastrointestinal problems

Impact on daily life

PAIS can have a **major impact on daily life**. Many people with PAIS are no longer able to work and are limited in everyday activities. Some can only manage very basic tasks, such as showering once a week. The most severely affected patients may spend much of their time lying down in a dark room, using sunglasses, sleep masks, or earplugs to protect themselves from light and sound.

Course of illness

The course of PAIS is:

- Often **unpredictable and fluctuating**
 - symptoms and severity can vary from day to day
 - periods of improvement and relapse may alternate
- Different for each condition and each person
- Often **long-term**

Some patients recover fully or partially over time, while others remain ill for life.

PAIS in children

Children can also develop PAIS. Their symptoms are similar to those in adults. School absence and loss of contact with peers are common. Diagnosis can be especially difficult in children, as they may struggle to describe their symptoms. Complaints are sometimes wrongly attributed to psychological causes, causing physical causes to be overlooked.

Care and research

PAIS are still **not well known or recognised**, including within healthcare systems. Patients often encounter:

- Lack of knowledge, recognition, and acknowledgement
- Symptoms being incorrectly explained as psychological
- Advice or treatments that do not help or worsen symptoms

At present, there is **no curative treatment** for PAIS. Care focuses on symptom relief and preventing deterioration. Scientific research into PAIS has increased in recent years. Researchers agree that PAIS have **physical causes**, and growing knowledge is essential to improve care and develop effective treatments.

About PAIS Alliantie

[Stichting PAIS Alliantie](#) is a national patient alliance representing people with post-acute infection syndromes.

PAIS Alliantie works to improve awareness, recognition, research, and care for people living with PAIS and their families