



## This hospital program hopes to help coronavirus patients who face lingering symptoms

*These long-haulers, as they are sometimes referred to, will likely grow as the country hits the grim marker of more than 10 million coronavirus cases and 238,000 deaths.*

[Tiffany Cusaac-Smith](#)

After getting over a difficult bout with the coronavirus this spring, Rosemarie Cmiel couldn't walk more than five feet without feeling winded. Cmiel had lost a significant portion of her hair and had difficulty breathing.

Cmiel, 73, believed that after getting over the virus that she would be able to recover, much like someone who had the flu. But that wouldn't be the case.

"I thought maybe it would just all go away but it just seems to keep haunting me," Cmiel, of Thornwood, told The Journal News/Iohud, adding that, "It just doesn't seem to want to go away."

Left with the lingering symptoms, Cmiel recalled thinking would she ever return back to her former self physically.

Cmiel is one of the dozens of patients in the Westchester Medical Center Health Network's new post-coronavirus recovery program, which uses a team of specialists to provide a rapid and personalized response to people with persistent symptoms.

Started around Labor Day, the program allows those who have contracted the virus to make an appointment, even if they don't have a primary physician. The team then assesses the patient and offers personalized care that can include psychiatry, rehabilitative medicine and cardiology.



Rosemarie Cmiel, 73 at the Westchester Medical Center after dealing with a bout against COVID-19 this spring

Dr. Gary Rogg, a driver of the post-COVID-19 recovery program, said they began to see a gap in medical care for people who have dealt with the initial stages of the virus but were continuing to have symptoms such as shortness of breath, fatigue and hair loss.

Some would have brain fog, where they couldn't make the connections as quickly as they used to, Rogg said.

"So, what was becoming apparent is (the coronavirus) became more of a chronic, long-term type of problem. That people, even once they recovered, they did not get back to their baseline health," he said.

Many of the patients would be healthy before getting the virus but either didn't have a primary doctor, or were often told that their symptoms would eventually subside, Rogg said.

"There's some people, when we see them, they are frustrated because when they go to another physician with a complaint, maybe have some work ... and they're told, 'Oh, you're fine. It'll go away,'" Rogg said.

These long-haulers, as they are sometimes referred to, will likely grow as the country hits the grim marker of more than 10 million coronavirus cases and 238,000 deaths.

Westchester County is in the midst of a second wave, though officials acknowledge that's not as significant as the first one that occurred in March. Since March, 42,179 Westchester residents have been infected and 1,477 residents have died from the virus.

Moreover, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently said that evidence suggests some people may require ongoing clinical care after contracting the coronavirus.

Approximately 10% of patients hospitalized for the coronavirus were readmitted to the same hospital within two months, according to a CDC report. Risk factors leading to readmission included age and chronic conditions such as diabetes.

Adell Davis, her husband and her daughter all caught the coronavirus in March. After her initial recovery from the virus, she didn't feel quite the same.

Davis, who is also part of the program, felt body stiffness that she had not had before contracting the virus. On top of that, her sense of smell has not fully come back.

With the program, Davis feels she's moving in the right direction, though she still might not be where she was before.



*Adell Davis Visiting with Dr. Carol Karmen*

“I thank God for where I am at this point, and continue to hopefully be positive, and move forward, whatever way I need to move,” Davis said.

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# COVID tests and a turkey dinner: Thanksgiving break for returning college kids

[Swapna Venugopal Ramaswamy](#)

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If starting freshman year in the grip of a pandemic was a confusing blur for college students and parents, the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday just made things worse.

Students who are currently on campus in some form of in-person learning will have to pack up their dorms and head home, some for up to three months. Others will have to quarantine, or take a rapid COVID test to be allowed at the family Thanksgiving table. Some will miss Thanksgiving with the family altogether.

There's nothing normal about this holiday.

"Parents should be as patient as possible," said Dr. Jen Naparstek Klein, a psychologist who specializes in child and family psychology at the Counseling Center in Bronxville. "Young adults often express their stress with resistance to parents' efforts to help. Keep talking with them, be empathic, and realize nothing is normal for them right now."

The week before the holiday, Pleasantville's Roberta Lasky is usually finalizing the menu and getting the plates and cutlery ready. Normally, she sets up two tables for the adults and a kids' table to accommodate about 20 close and extended family members. This year, even her own mother demurred when asked to take a COVID test before coming to dinner.

"They said they weren't getting a test to come over for dinner for five hours," said Lasky. So, this year, dinner will be for four.

But first, Lasky will drive to Skidmore College in Saratoga to help pack up her daughter's room.

Like other colleges and universities across the country, Skidmore has required students to leave before Thanksgiving and only return in time for the spring semester on Feb 1. The new rules are an effort to minimize the risk of spreading COVID-19 as students travel home, spend time with friends and family, and then return to campus.

Dr. Gary Rogg, of Westchester Medical Center's new Post-COVID-19 Recovery Program, said college students returning home from outside the state should get tested before coming home. He also advises that students returning home wear a mask for the first three days at home and get a rapid COVID test to ensure the safety of those at home.

### **Thanksgiving is now a 'stress' break**

Pre-COVID-19, Thanksgiving break was a long weekend for most students.

Now, those few days have morphed into months at home, spent with family members who themselves have been limited to working and recreating in that same space since spring. Many will be involved in remote learning over the break, as well.

Experts say college students are under an extraordinary amount of stress because their normal avenues for socialization and academic process, such as classroom learning, collaboration, library use and face-to-face time with professors, are thwarted.

When they return home, they'll need to rest, find ways to stay connected to friends, and deal with the reality of winter and COVID, which will be harder to cope with than COVID restrictions during spring, summer and fall.

"Watch for depression and anxiety, which can look like lethargy, apathy, withdrawal, or irritability, observable tension and excessive worry," said Naparstek Klein.

"Winter projects at home are advisable and so is establishing 'winter goals' for the months at home. These goals don't have to be serious, they should also be fun and relaxing, and even health-oriented."

### **Who *is* coming home?**

While many colleges have a fully online schedule, others who have allowed in-person learning on campus are requiring students to fully move out before Thanksgiving. Where colleges allow students to remain on campus after Thanksgiving, such as Tufts University in Boston, students are required not to travel, prompting some to skip Thanksgiving at home.

With both sons attending college within a three-hour drive — one at Cornell and the other at Tufts — Radha Anand and her husband Sriram, who live in Yorktown Heights, expected to see their children often.

Due to the pandemic, neither son came home after being dropped off at the beginning of fall semester, thanks to the restrictions on the movement of college students amid the pandemic.

Now, her older son, Sidharth, a senior at Tufts, will be skipping Thanksgiving. Tufts requires students who leave for the holiday to stay away until February.

Instead, he will celebrate “Friendsgiving” with his suitemates in the dorm and has asked his parents for the recipe to one of his Thanksgiving favorites: Butter paneer masala.

His motivation to forgo the holiday with his family is to remain in in-person learning. When his campus closed abruptly during the spring semester, the biology and biotech double major had to do his science labs remotely.

“The professor was doing the labs and the students were watching it but it’s not the same as hands-on experience,” Anand said. “Plus, this is his last year as an undergrad and he wanted to be with his friends.”

Meanwhile, the couple will help their younger son, Saketh, pack up his Cornell University dorm before Thanksgiving and bring him home where he will stay until February.

State University of New York schools are mandating all students using on-campus facilities to test negative for COVID-19 within the 10 days prior to leaving campus to prevent community spread as students return to their hometowns. That means SUNY's 64 colleges and universities will test about 140,000 students over a 10-day period preceding Thanksgiving break.

Leslie Solan has always hosted her children's college friends at Thanksgiving, those who are foreign students or had no place to go for the holiday. That's out this year and Solan has asked both her kids — her son attends Cornell and her daughter recently graduated from the University of Pennsylvania — to get a negative COVID test before coming home.

“I have an elderly mother and I have to be very careful,” said Solan, who is from Montebello. “I am asking my son and daughter to take a COVID test before coming. You know, we feel bad. I am thinking about those kids that don't have family close, what Thanksgiving is going to look like for them.”

Minni Sivakumar remembers the excitement of waking up at the break of dawn to pick her daughter up from the airport on Thanksgiving Day, just a few years ago. Her daughter was then a student at UCLA.

“I’d drive by myself for an hour-and-a-half, without my husband or son, so we could talk uninterrupted the whole way home,” said the Shrub Oak mom. “We’d catch up on all the family and neighborhood gossip.”

This year’s planning has been fraught with confusion for Sivakumar, whose son is a sophomore at SUNY Buffalo.

Sivakumar and her husband, Sivakumar Govindarajan, decided it was too risky during the pandemic for their son, Gautham, to take the train from Buffalo to Croton. Driving for 12 hours to pick him up didn’t make sense either.

Instead, Gautham, who lives in an off-campus apartment, decided to spend the holiday with his apartment mates.

Then this week, he called to ask his parents if they could pick him up after all. All his friends had now decided to go home. The problem: He wants to go back to his Buffalo apartment right after Thanksgiving.

"We are trying to negotiate a deal where he doesn't go back until at least the next weekend," said Sivakumar. "It's possible because all his classes are remote."

Dr. Rogg said students need to be vigilant that they are following basic safety protocols while they are at home, especially if they are meeting with friends.

"Younger people can be very asymptomatic. So that's the question then about what to do; certainly mask wearing has been proven to help," he said. "But the other thing that is very, very important is strict handwashing and not touch your eyes, your nose or your mouth until you've washed your hands, because those are the portals of entry."

Carolee Brakewood isn't taking any chances. The Port Chester mom with two college-aged children will pass up the annual trip to Maine to celebrate Thanksgiving with family. She said she didn't feel safe exposing her elderly parents and in-laws, who are in their late 80s, to any potential illness.

Instead, Brakewood, her husband, her daughter, Molly, a freshman at Cornell, and son, William, a junior at Brown, will have Thanksgiving at home. They will be joined by Brakewood's nephew, who is living with them.

The house will be crowded once the weekend rolls around: William is home, having opted for the online option. Molly is staying until the spring semester.

"Five of us are going to be working from home through the winter," Brakewood said. "I took over the bedroom, my kids each have a bedroom, there's an attic room my nephew took over and my husband took over the sun porch. It's like, we each had to carve out a space. There's like a lot going on in the house in one time."

Not that Brakewood is complaining about the extended "home for the holidays" experience.

"I am happy they'll be with us," she said. "I mean, to me, not that I'm thinking COVID is a great thing, but it's been a bit of a silver lining that we're enjoying this opportunity to see more of them. I mean, because otherwise they just go away and that's it, you know?"

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