

# DIY treatments and clinical trials – one person's tale of long covid

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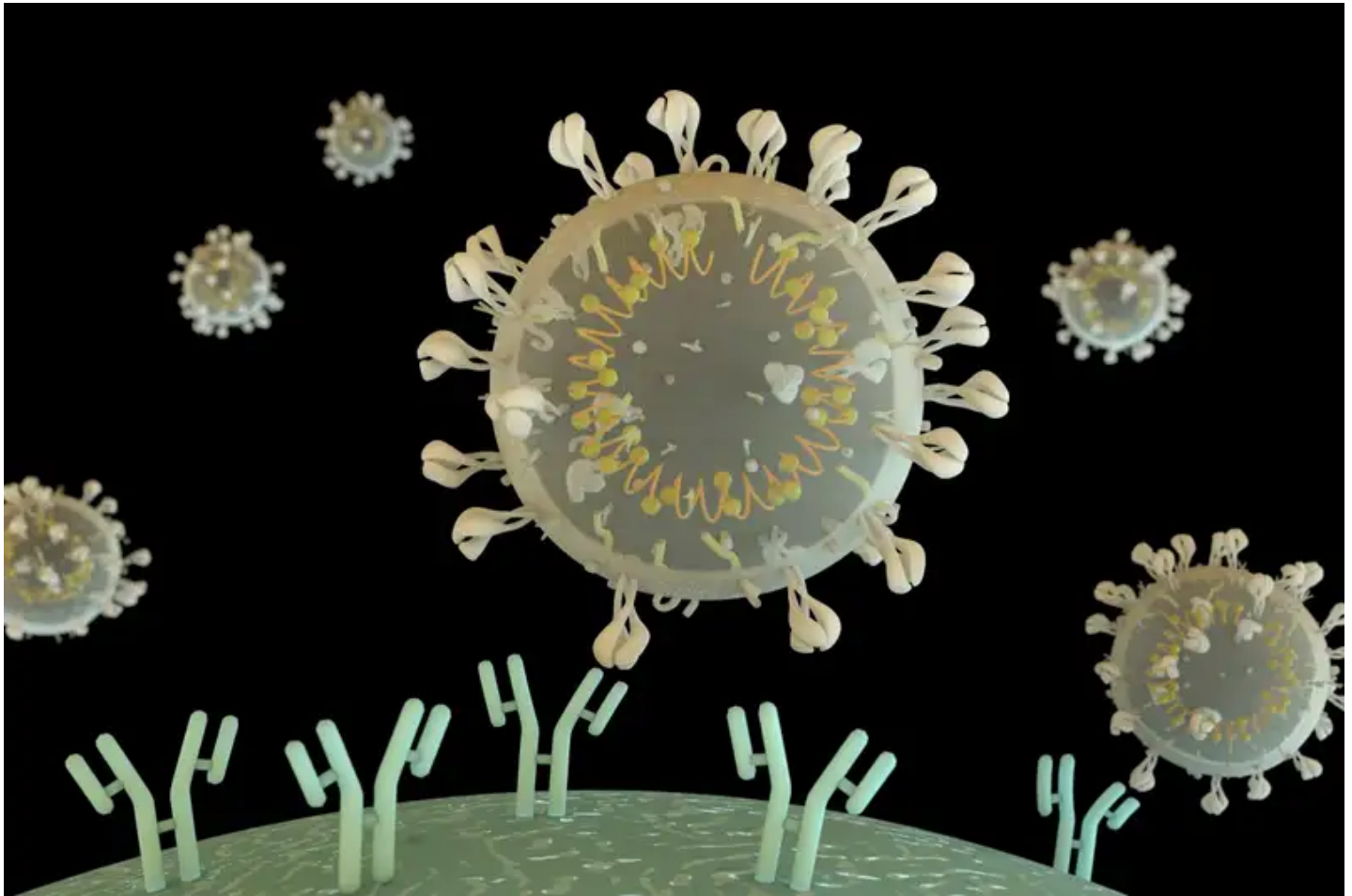


Illustration of a receptor on the surface of a B cell binding to SARS-CoV-2, as part of the body's immune response.

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On [Body Politic's covid-19 support group](#), which uses the app Slack, my username says it all. I am [MBCaschetta\\_May2020](#). I caught covid-19 on 15 May 2020 and I have been battling long-term symptoms ever since: lung pain, muscle weakness, brain fog, debilitating exhaustion and a perpetually sore throat. Despite the [promise of new treatments](#), for those who have been suffering for years, interventions still feel far away.

So, what is a long hauler to do? All around the world, desperados like me are entering research trials of treatments that have proven efficacious in other diseases whose symptoms resemble  of long covid.

I have enrolled in [a clinical trial at the University of Massachusetts Amherst](#), where I will strap on a pair of scuba diver-like trousers with pockets that will circulate warm water around my lower extremities. My heat therapy will take 40 minutes, five days a week, for eight weeks. The team will look out for improvements in a battery of chemical markers measured at the start of the trial.

The trial's coordinator, [Corinna Serviente](#), says that heat therapy has improved muscle function and the health of blood vessels in other conditions and in healthy people, and may also work to relieve muscle aches and fatigue in long covid. So far, only two people, both in their 70s, have participated. It is too soon to tell whether their markers suggest any improvement, or if they feel any better.

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There are many other trials targeting the multitude of symptoms associated with long covid. For instance, researchers at the University of California, San Diego, [are investigating hyperbaric oxygen therapy](#), in which you breathe pure oxygen in a pressurised environment. Under these conditions, the lungs gather more oxygen than normal, which is thought to promote healing, decrease inflammation and encourage better oxygen supply after the therapy is completed. The team hopes it may improve people's shortness of breath or difficulties exercising.

Meanwhile, investigators at Hackensack University Medical Center in New Jersey are planning to [test beta blockers on long haulers](#). These drugs reduce blood pressure and ease stress on the  and are used off-label to treat irregular heart rhythms – something many people with covid also experience.

And at Missouri State University in Springfield, [sodium pyruvate – a non-steroid nasal spray that has shown promise in lung disease](#), improving lung function and reducing coughing and fatigue – is being tested on a group of people with long covid. The list goes on.

Will these interventions work? Only time will tell. But like many other long haulers, I am willing to try anything. So, I find myself googling “hyperbaric oxygen therapy near me”. I talk to my family doctor about prescribing low-dose naltrexone, an off-label drug for chronic fatigue syndrome, after seeing it being tested in trials for long covid. I look up nitric oxide that bodybuilders take to improve blood oxygen levels in their muscles and wonder whether I should talk to my doctor about that next.

In my own desperate cohort at home – sample size of one – I really need something to work.

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