

- Virus**Covid-19 can cause 'significant' brain shrinkage**

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People who survive even mild cases of Covid-19 may suffer a loss of brain tissue, reports the Los Angeles Times. As part of an ongoing study in the U.K., researchers took brain scans from 782 volunteers with pre-pandemic scans on record, in order to compare the results. About half the participants had recovered from the coronavirus; most of those had experienced mild or moderate symptoms and only 15 had been hospitalized. The other half had not caught the disease. Studying the two sets of before-and-after scans, the researchers saw what they described as a “significant” decrease in gray matter in the regions of the Covid patients’ brains linked to smell and taste—the loss of those senses is a common symptom of Covid-19. Some of those regions are also involved in the memory of experiences that evoke emotional reactions, which may explain the “brain fog” reported by some sufferers of so-called long Covid. What causes this brain damage is unclear; it could be a result of the virus spreading to the brain or a consequence of the symptoms of the disease, such as inflammation and breathing difficulties. The study has yet to be peer-reviewed, and the authors say more research is needed to determine whether the loss of brain tissue will affect survivors’ memory. Still, former Food and Drug Administration commissioner Scott Gottlieb says the findings are “very concerning, because it does suggest that the virus could be having a direct effect on certain portions of the brain.”

