

One Year Later, How Does COVID-19 Affect Children?

We have all lived with coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) for about a year now.

Overall, we have learned that children get sick less often than adults, but a few children have gotten severely sick. This update summarizes the current understanding of how children are affected and gives ways to keep families safe as children continue to grow and thrive.

Children Are at Risk

We know that this virus mostly spreads via respiratory droplets when people with infection cough, sneeze, talk, or even breathe, although it can spread in other ways. Some people with COVID-19 have fever, cough, shortness of breath, muscle aches, headache, and diarrhea, symptoms that are similar to those from other viral infections such as the flu, but some have no symptoms at all. Children can get COVID-19 from family members and other close contacts such as friends and teachers at school and from sports activities. As children get older, their risk of getting sick enough to be hospitalized is higher, although newborns and young infants are also at increased risk. Risk of death in children is far lower than in adults, but some children have died of COVID-19. Children who are Hispanic, Black, or American Indian or Alaska native are at higher risk for severe disease and death.

Children With Special Health Care Needs Are at Higher Risk

Studies have shown that children with certain underlying conditions are at higher risk for severe COVID-19. These conditions include obesity, asthma, neurologic disorders, heart disease, and being immunocompromised, among others.

What Is Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children?

Rarely, children who have been infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 develop a condition called *multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children*. Children may develop this syndrome about 2 to 4 weeks after infection, and some of these children had no symptoms of COVID-19. These children require hospitalization and many need complex supportive therapies to help respond to what seems to be the body's strong response to being infected with the virus. Some children with this condition have died.

What Can Parents Do?

The most important way to prevent COVID-19 is to avoid getting infected. All family members should follow important recommendations. First, practice the 3 W's: (1) watch your distance, keeping at

Preventing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) infection
All family members should follow these recommendations to avoid COVID-19 infection and prevent further spread of the disease.



✓ Practice the 3 W's

Watch your distance—keep at least 6 ft between you and others

Wear a cloth mask when out of your house

Wash your hands often with soap and water for >20 s, and avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands

✗ Avoid the 3 C's

Closed spaces with poor ventilation

Crowded places with many people nearby

Close-contact settings, such as close-range conversations

least 6-ft distance between you and others; (2) wear a cloth mask when out of your house; and (3) wash your hands often with soap and water for more than 20 seconds, avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. Second, avoid the 3 C's: (1) closed spaces with poor ventilation; (2) crowded places with many people nearby; and (3) close-contact settings, such as close-range conversations.

Flu shots are recommended for all children every year for children older than 6 months and are even more important this year because it is possible to get both COVID-19 and the flu. When a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine becomes available, talk to your physician about you and your family getting vaccinated.

Parents need to balance their children's needs to stay safe with their needs to learn and socialize with peers. Parents should consult their school system and health department for the best information on local spread of COVID-19, area rules and recommendations, and school procedures. We want to keep children safe and learning while minimizing risks to themselves, their friends, family members, including grandparents, and other vulnerable members of society.

For More Information

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/children/symptoms.html>

https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/covid_inflammatory_condition.aspx

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