

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT CHILDREN AND COVID-19

What are the symptoms of COVID-19 in children?

- A. They are similar to adult symptoms (fever, cough, runny nose, shortness of breath, muscle aches, fatigue, headache, vomiting, diarrhea, loss of taste or smell). Children are more likely to have abdominal symptoms such as vomiting or diarrhea, and somewhat less likely to have cough and shortness of breath. Infants may show have difficulty feeding or behave irritably.

Does NM have more COVID-positive children than other states?

- A. Many states (and countries) initially focused on testing hospitalized, severely ill or elderly patients. New Mexico has done broad-based testing and also prioritized contact tracing, which can help identify children and other household members of positive cases. Early on, NM was identifying a larger percentage of children, but now other states are reporting similar numbers as they are expanding their testing. Children birth to 17 make up approximately 11% of total cases identified as of mid-July. Children under 5 make up less than 2% of cases. Some studies show that children are less likely to be the initial (index) case in a household. This is partly because they are more isolated and less likely to be exposed. However, children under 10 also seem to be less likely to be infected even when exposed to a positive household member.

Are kids in NM getting sicker with COVID-19 compared to other states?

- A. No. Most children have had mild symptoms and very few (less than 1%) have been hospitalized. In general, children seem to be less severely affected by COVID-19 than adults, and this is true in NM as well.

Which children are at highest risk from COVID-19?

- A. Like adults, children with pre-existing conditions are at higher risk of COVID-related complications. This includes conditions like immune-suppression, diabetes, obesity, or chronic heart or lung disease (but not mild asthma).

How can children get tested?

- A. Children can get tested wherever adults are tested, including at public health offices around the state or at local testing events. Hospitals that treat children can test symptomatic children as well. The Department of Health COVID website <https://cv.nmhealth.org/> has information about testing events in your area. If your child tests positive you will receive a call from the Department of Health to discuss what to do in your specific situation.

What is the inflammatory disorder I have been hearing about that affects kids?

- A. This disorder – which the CDC refers to as Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children, or MIS-C - is a rare complication that seems to occur 3-4 weeks after the initial novel coronavirus infection. There have been over 200 cases identified in Europe and the U.S., mostly in New York. MIS-C is thought to be an inflammatory response that can affect various organs, including the heart. Children suspected of having MIS-C need to be seen in a hospital and often need ICU support.

What are the symptoms of MIS-C?

- A. Symptoms are variable but may include prolonged fever, skin rash, conjunctivitis, abdominal pain, vomiting and/or diarrhea, an enlarged lymph node in the neck, and extreme fatigue or weakness.

If my child is sick should I contact my PCP or take them in to be seen?

- A. If your child is sick please call your PCP and they will help you determine whether the problem should be handled over the phone, with a telehealth visit, or in person.

Is it safe to take my child to the doctor for a well check or should we stay home?

- A. Pediatric and family physician offices are open and do want to see children, especially those under five who need immunizations and those children who have chronic medical conditions. Offices are using COVID-safe practices, including separating sick and well children. It is very important to maintain your child's immunization schedule so that your child does not come down with a preventable illness like measles or pertussis. Well checks also provide other necessary services such as screening for developmental milestones, as well as counseling and parental guidance.

Should children wear masks in public places?

- A. NM guidance is that children three and over should wear masks in public places. Masks help prevent spread of COVID-19 by catching droplets from speaking, coughing or sneezing so those droplets do not infect others. Children with severe cognitive or respiratory impairments may have a hard time tolerating a face mask, so special precautions may be needed. Children should remove their masks while eating or drinking.