

New COVID-Related Disease Seen in Children

Pediatricians and researchers are working to learn more about a mysterious inflammatory syndrome linked to COVID-19 that has been reported in children.

The shock-like syndrome, dubbed "multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children" (MIS-C) by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), mimics a relatively rare inflammatory illness called Kawasaki disease. MIS-C comes with fever, red eyes, swelling of hands and feet, abdominal pain, and other symptoms.

*****SOT*****

Dr. Barry Gray, Pediatric Infectious Disease Specialist, OSF HealthCare Children's Hospital of Illinois

"It looks a little bit like Kawasaki disease or sometimes like Staphylococcal toxic shock syndrome or Staph scalded skin syndrome. Some of these children tested positive for coronavirus or tested positive for antibody to the virus, indicating previous exposure. Now, we don't know for certain if the coronavirus produces similar effects as these diseases we already know about, but that's what is being looked into right now at a number of centers – both in this country and around the world."

Although COVID-19 is mostly a respiratory disease, MIS-C affects blood vessels and organs and involves a "hyper response" of the child's immune system to the virus.

MIS-C has been reported in at least 19 states, including Michigan and Illinois, but is still relatively rare.

*****SOT*****

Dr. Barry Gray, Pediatric Infectious Disease Specialist, OSF HealthCare Children's Hospital of Illinois

"It is very rare, and we would be looking at those children who are much sicker than others. The vast majority of kids don't make it to the hospital, let alone to the intensive care unit. So we're talking about a very small group of a very small group to begin with."

Despite the rarity of the disease at this point, parents should remain vigilant. Early detection can prevent serious illness. Dr. Gray urges parents to call their pediatrician right away if their child shows symptoms including persistent fever, rash, abdominal pain, vomiting and diarrhea.

Additionally, if a child is showing any emergency warning signs including trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, bluish lips or face, severe abdominal pain, or other concerning signs, parents should seek emergency care right away.

*****SOT*****

Dr. Barry Gray, Pediatric Infectious Disease Specialist, OSF HealthCare Children's Hospital of Illinois

"They may have skin rash, they may come in with shock and low blood pressure. It may affect their kidneys. The major effect is on the arteries, where there's inflammation, and that's one of the things that is in common with Kawasaki disease, which is an arteritis, but we don't know the cause."

While researchers are working quickly to learn more about MIS-C, children are presenting with the disease weeks after peaks of COVID-19 infection.

The best thing you can do for your family is to continue following recommendations about physical distancing, and hand washing, to avoid contracting COVID-19 in the first place.

For more information on COVID-19, including frequently asked questions, please visit the OSF HealthCare COVID-19 digital health hub: www.osfhealthcare.org/covid19/.

If you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and it is not an emergency, use one of the digital care options offered by OSF. You can connect through Clare, a digital assistant available through the OSF website, or by calling the 24/7 nurse hotline at 833-OSF-KNOW (833-673-5669).