

# COVID-19 risks to Children and Young People

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## What is COVID-19

COVID-19 is a new strain of coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are known to cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Severe Acute Respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS).

## The effect of COVID-19 on Children & Young People

There are an increasing number of COVID-19 cases in children worldwide. The effects of this disease on children is usually not as great as the impact on elderly adults. Whilst most children will not develop COVID-19 symptoms, they can still be carriers. For most children who do develop symptoms, they will have a mild form of the illness.

COVID-19 associated hyperinflammatory shock has been observed in increasing numbers as children from 4-14 have presented with symptoms that initially appeared to be a multisystem organ failure.

## Symptoms

The [symptoms of coronavirus](#) in children can be hard to spot:

- High temperature (39°C+)
- A new continuous cough – frequent coughing over a long period
- Loss or change to sense of smell or taste

**Urgent action** ([call 111](#)) is required if the child has any of the symptoms which are emerging as indicative of COVID-19 associated hyperinflammatory shock:

- Tummy pains and not wanting to eat or drink
- Diarrhoea and/or vomiting
- Sore throat
- High temperature (39°C+)
- Muscle pain
- Rash – like sunburn
- Difficulty breathing

## Reported complications

Kawasaki Disease has been linked to some cases “*overlapping features of toxic shock syndrome and atypical Kawasaki disease, with blood parameters consistent with severe COVID-19 in children.*” (BMJ 28.04.2020)

A Great Ormond Street Hospital spokesperson has reported: “*Across the UK, a small number of very sick children have sought medical advice from the NHS with a particular set of symptoms, including a fever and abdominal pain. We are working with colleagues across the NHS to try to understand why this is, any relationship with COVID-19 and how to best treat these patients.*”

Whilst these symptoms could be due to a different condition, it is imperative that the family are contacted immediately if you suspect a child in your care may have COVID-19.

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Parents' should contact their GP, a local out-of-hours service, or [NHS 111](#) as soon as possible if the child is presenting with a combination of these symptoms.

Parents/Carers must be directed to their local A&E department or call 999 and ask for an ambulance immediately if the child has severe symptoms or they are rapidly getting worse.

### Specific advice for children and young people with underlying health conditions

Great Ormond Street Hospital has produced detailed advice sheets for parents and carers of children with underlying conditions who may be at risk of serious illness due to contracting COVID-19. Advice for many conditions can be accessed by clicking on this link to [Great Ormond Street Hospital](#) factsheets, eg

- Asthma
- Cardiology
- Cystic fibrosis
- Gastroenterology and Dermatology allergy
- Haemodialysis
- Kidney transplant
- Non-invasive or tracheostomy ventilation

### Other effects of COVID-19 on children

COVID-19 can affect children and young people in many ways, not just physically. It is important to be aware of the effects that isolation has on the young person, which may affect their mental health. Further resources are available to support children and young people's wellbeing on the Kelsi website.

### Returning to school

The document [Returning to School for PD and Complex Medical Needs Students after COVID-19 Lockdown](#), details the challenges, risks, consideration of who is likely to be affected, strategies and resources. A full risk assessment should be written in collaboration with parents/carers and students to ensure optimum safety at all times. The government has produced guidance on identifying those [vulnerable children and young people](#) who are more at risk.

Caution must be applied when allowing vulnerable children and young people back into the school environment until the pandemic is contained and we can ensure the safety of all our pupils.

### Useful documents:

[Coronavirus information for families with vulnerable children and young people](#)

[Advice for parents during Coronavirus](#)



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[Advice sheet for children](#)

[Coronavirus facts for kids](#)

[Coronavirus a book for children](#)