



COVID-19 and the risk it poses in children and babies

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✓ The severity of COVID-19 for children and babies

Children and young people are vulnerable to the new coronavirus, but COVID-19 disease appears to be less severe in children than in some older adults, and scientists are not sure why.

Esta diferencia de edad de los casos graves **se ha convertido en una cuestión crítica a medida que los científicos compiten para frenar la propagación del virus**. Comienzan a surgir algunas pistas sobre este misterio y las respuestas podrían ayudar a establecer qué well as point the way to treatments.

In the United States, doctors say they have seen milder symptoms, such as fever and dry cough in children who visit the doctor's office, contrary to what happens with adults, who turn out to be much more serious.

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At Seattle Children's Hospital, we don't see serious illness in children, it's relatively indistinguishable from the flu for us, but we can't tell the difference unless we do a test.

(Janet Englund, professor of infection diseases at the University of Washington
Seattle and a physician at Seattle Children's Hospital)

What is known about the age difference

Countries that experienced more extensive outbreaks of COVID-19, including China and Italy, have seen the worst impacts in older adults, and the number of people hospitalized and killed by the disease increases with age. Health problems these people already had, such as high blood pressure, a depressed immune system, and diabetes, have also worsened outcomes among those infected.

However, a small percentage of younger people, from infants to young adults, have also suffered serious harm.

Un estudio publicado en febrero en el *Journal of the American Medical Association* sobre más de 72 mil personas infectadas en China, mostró que sólo el 2% de los infectados en la uncer the age or 19. 2.5% of the infected youth, 2.5% developed a serious illness and 0.2% developed a critical illness.

But this same report also explains that "it is not possible to determine the extent of infection among children and what role they play in transmission, whether they are less susceptible or present differently clinically (ie, milder presentations of the illness)". That is, few children are tested for the virus, so there is still not much good information on how many children have generally begun to become infected. Therefore, it is difficult to measure the rate of serious illness for young people.

Babies can have serious complications

Si bien los niños parecen menos propensos a experimentar síntomas graves de COVID-19 que los adultos, el riesgo no es nulo. En un estudio que se publicó el 16 de marzo en la revista *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 2,100 children in China, children of all ages were found to be vulnerable to COVID-19, and although the vast majority experienced mild symptoms, some they did not experience any.

One caveat for this study is that only 1/3 of the children in the sample were actually examined and confirmed with COVID-19. The rest were probable cases of COVID-19, which means that there is a possibility that another pathogen may have caused the symptoms in these children.

El mayor riesgo en bebés puede deberse a que éstos todavía fortalecen su sistema inmunológico. **Cuando nace un bebé, retiene algo de resistencia a la infección gracias a los anticuerpos de su madre.** Esa protección disminuye durante los primeros meses de vida a medida que el bebé desarrolla sus propias defensas. Al mismo tiempo, los bebés están expuestos a todo tipo de estímulos ambientales por primera vez: bacterias, polen y polvo, por ejemplo.

To prevent their bodies from overreacting to harmless things, their immune reactions are affected. "In general, it's the babies' immune systems that cause minor infections or flu," said Bria Coates, an assistant professor of pediatrics at Northwestern University and an assistant physician at Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital in Chicago.

The best strategy to protect children from COVID-19

Infection prevention is the best way to protect everyone, regardless of age. Hand washing,

for example, is a very important tactic for both young and old to control the spread of the coronavirus.

En todo el país, escuelas, colegios, oficinas y eventos deportivos se han cerrado para limitar la propagación de la infección. La cancelación de reuniones es un componente clave del distanciamiento social, al igual que la práctica de limitar la exposición a otras personas para **do not have a scheduled date to resume** .

Steven Zeichner, a professor of pediatrics at the University of Virginia School of Medicine, also stresses keeping children up-to-date on their vaccinations and making sure they get regular flu shots. While the influenza vaccine cannot prevent COVID-19, it can prevent influenza, which in turn reduces stress in the health care system and in families.

If you suspect that your child may be infected with COVID-19, the best thing to do is to call your doctor for advice. Englund points out that parents should seek medical attention if they notice that the child is having trouble breathing as that certainly needs to be urgently reviewed.