

What we know about Long COVID in children and adolescents



LONG COVID ESSENTIALS: A series by [The Sick Times](#) & [Long COVID Justice](#)

There is conflicting information in the media regarding the risk children face from COVID-19 and their chances of later developing Long COVID. Here's where the research stands as of November 2024.

* How likely are children to get COVID-19 and Long COVID?

- Children are about as likely as adults to get COVID-19. They account for [18% of all US COVID-19 cases](#) between 2020 and 2023.
 - Children with certain pre-existing conditions, including intellectual disabilities and neurogenetic conditions like autism, may be more at risk for severe symptoms.
- Children are [also at risk of Long COVID](#). One major review paper estimates that [between 10 and 20%](#) of children and young adults have long-term symptoms after COVID-19.
 - Long COVID appears to be [more common](#) in adolescents (ages 12-17) and in girls, though more research is needed on Long COVID and gender among kids.

* How sick do children get?

- Children older than one are less likely to become seriously ill from COVID-19. But the virus can be [especially dangerous](#) for babies, particularly if their gestational parent is not vaccinated during pregnancy.
 - As in adults, severe cases of COVID-19 are also more likely to result in developing Long COVID. But Long COVID can occur after an acute case of any severity.



- Children may fully recover before later developing symptoms linked to Long COVID. The symptoms [may differ](#) from those of the initial, acute infection.
 - Children (ages 6-11) and adolescents (ages 12-17) seem to have [distinct clusters](#) of Long COVID-associated symptoms, which may differ from those seen in adults.
 - There are child-specific diagnoses associated with Long COVID, including [Pediatric Acute-Onset Neuropsychiatric Syndrome](#) (PANS) and Pediatric Inflammatory Multisystem Syndrome (PIMS), also called Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C).

* **How to speak to children about COVID-19 and Long COVID**

- It's best to err on the side of caution and believe children when they say or behave as though they feel sick.
- Most children do not have prolonged COVID-19 symptoms. If your child has been experiencing a symptom for more than a month, reach out to their medical provider.
- Children may not be able to monitor their own symptoms, so parents should [document them](#), along with changes in a child's behavior, grades in school, and ability to participate in activities that were previously easy.
- Children may struggle to express themselves, so approach conversations with empathy and be prepared to spend time answering their questions.
 - [Consider using tools developed specifically to help children](#) describe their pain and manage their symptoms.



* Resources

- [Educational resources and support](#) – Long COVID Families
- [Document on discussing illness with a child](#) – National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization
- [Pain scale to help children \(age 3 and older\) describe their pain](#) – Wong-Baker FACES Foundation
- [Child-friendly resources to help children manage their energy levels](#) – Long COVID Kids
- [Document for providers navigating follow-up care of infants, children, and adolescents after COVID-19](#) – American Academy of Pediatrics

FULL SERIES OF FACTSHEETS WITH LINKED RESOURCES + MORE:
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QUESTIONS? connect@s4hi.org

This series was designed by people living with Long COVID and associated diseases. Each resource sheet has been reviewed by patient and medical experts. This is an informational resource, not medical advice. Publication date: 12/13/2024.