

Childhood Obesity and Long COVID

Long COVID includes any symptoms that last or start more than 4 weeks after getting a COVID-19 infection. It can affect nearly any organ in the body and can cause different symptoms. Anyone who gets COVID-19 can develop Long COVID. Studies have shown that obesity can cause serious COVID-19 complications and is one of the major risk factors for Long COVID in children and adolescents.



Symptoms In Children

Common Symptoms: may include tiredness, mood changes such as anxiety and depression, trouble sleeping, shortness of breath or troubled breathing, and headache.

Other Symptoms: may include brain fog or trouble in thinking and memory or paying attention, stomach pain, changes in eating, joint pain, sore throat, chest pain, cough that won't go away, changes to smell or taste (more common in teenagers)



Risk Factors

- Childhood obesity can contribute to serious COVID-19 infection in children and increases the chances of developing Long COVID
- Other health problems, also prevalent in obese children, like diabetes, breathing problems like asthma, and heart trouble can also increase the chances of developing Long COVID after COVID-19 infection in children
- Multi-system inflammatory syndrome can cause Long COVID in children



Multi-System Inflammatory Syndrome

The CDC defines multi-system inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C) as a disease where different parts of the body can swell, including the heart, lungs, kidneys, brain, skin, eyes, or digestive organs like the stomach. It can be a serious health concern.

New studies have reported that most children who developed MIS-C had COVID-19 before. MIS-C more often affects children who are overweight or obese.

Prevention:

- Prevent COVID-19 in the first place by wearing masks, washing hands, avoiding touching mouth, nose, and eyes
- Vaccinate children who are 6 months and older (boosters are available for everyone 5 years and older, if eligible)
- Eat healthy meals and drink plenty of water
- Exercise regularly

Long COVID Treatment:

Treatment depends on what symptoms your child is experiencing. If your child has symptoms consistent with Long COVID, consult their pediatrician for treatment options. UTHealth also provides pediatric care for Long COVID patients. For more information on Long COVID scan the following QR codes, call or visit:

publichealth.harriscountytexas.gov • 832-927-7575



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