

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT CHILDREN AND COVID-19**

### **What are the symptoms of COVID-19 in children?**

- A. They are similar to adult symptoms (fever, cough, runny nose, shortness of breath, muscle aches, fatigue, headache, vomiting, diarrhea, loss of taste or smell). Children are more likely to have abdominal symptoms such as vomiting or diarrhea, and somewhat less likely to have cough and shortness of breath. Infants may show have difficulty feeding or behave irritably.

### **Does NM have more COVID-positive children than other states?**

- A. NM ranks second among states in percent of positive cases that are under 20 years of age. In NM, 12% of positive cases have been children and adolescents; the national average is 3%. However, this does not necessarily mean that New Mexico has more positive cases in children; we may just be identifying more of our younger cases than other states. Why? Because while some states have focused on testing hospitalized or elderly patients, New Mexico has done broad-based testing and also prioritized contact tracing, which can help identify children and other household members of positive cases.

### **Are kids in NM getting sicker with COVID-19 compared to other states?**

- A. No. Most children have had mild symptoms and very few have been hospitalized. In general, children seem to be less severely affected by COVID-19 than adults, and this is true in NM as well.

### **Which children are at highest risk from COVID-19?**

- A. Like adults, children with pre-existing conditions are at higher risk of COVID-related complications. This includes conditions like immune-suppression, diabetes, obesity, or chronic heart or lung disease (but not mild asthma).

### **How can children get tested?**

- A. Children can get tested wherever adults are tested, including at public health offices or testing events. The Department of Health COVID website <https://cv.nmhealth.org/> has information about testing events in your area. If your child tests positive you will receive a call from the Department of Health to discuss what to do in your specific situation.

### **What is the inflammatory disorder I have been hearing about that affects kids?**

- A. This disorder – which the CDC refers to as Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children, or MIS-C - is a rare complication that seems to occur 3-4 weeks after the initial novel coronavirus infection. There have been over 200 cases identified in Europe and the U.S., mostly in New York. MIS-C is thought to be an inflammatory response that can affect various organs, including the heart. Children suspected of having MIS-C need to be seen in a hospital and often need ICU support.

### **What are the symptoms of MIS-C?**

- A. Symptoms can include fever, skin rash, conjunctivitis, abdominal pain, vomiting and/or diarrhea, an enlarged lymph node in the neck, red tongue, cracked dry lips, irritability, and extreme fatigue or weakness.

**Is it safe to take my child to the doctor for a well check or should we stay home?**

- A. Pediatric and family physician offices are open and do want to see children, especially those under five who need immunizations. Offices are using COVID-safe practices, including separating sick and well children. It is very important to maintain your child's immunization schedule so that your child does not come down with a preventable illness like measles or pertussis. Well checks also provide other necessary services such as screening for developmental milestones, as well as counseling and parental guidance.

**Should children wear masks in public places?**

- A. NM guidance is that children three and over should wear masks in public places as much as possible. Masks help prevent spread of COVID-19 by catching droplets from speaking, coughing or sneezing so those droplets do not infect others. Children with severe cognitive or respiratory impairments may have a hard time tolerating a face mask, so special precautions may be needed. Children should remove their masks while eating or drinking.