

As omicron spreads, child hospitalizations climb 30% in past week

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(HealthDay)—Child hospitalizations for COVID-19 jumped 30% this

past week as the Omicron variant spread like wildfire throughout the United States.

By Dec. 28, the country had an average of 260 pediatric COVID-19 hospitalizations each day, according to the [latest data](#) from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In New York City alone, child hospitalizations are up fivefold since early December, nearly all among unvaccinated kids, *CBS News* reported.

Parents should take the [Omicron variant](#) seriously, Dr. Sallie Permar told the news outlet. She is pediatrician-in-chief at New York-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center in New York City.

"The vaccine is so much safer than getting the virus itself," Permar said. "And, so, giving your child the [vaccine](#) keeps them safer than letting them get infected with this virus without any immunity from a vaccine."

The symptoms being seen are "serious enough to be admitted to the hospital, which again is an indication that this is not just a disease of adults," she added.

Children ages 5 and older can now receive a COVID vaccine. Yet in New York state, for example, only roughly 27% of 5- to 11-year-olds are vaccinated, *CBS News* reported. The [vaccination rate](#) is even lower in the United States as a whole, at about 23%.

"We need to get child vaccinations up. We need to get them higher than they are, particularly in the 5- to 11-year-old age group," Mary Bassett, acting commissioner of the New York State Department of Health, told *CBS News*.

Hospitals do typically see a rise in pediatric admissions this time of year, Permar noted.

Despite the rise in hospitalizations, New York Gov. Kathy Hochul plans to urge all school superintendents to keep their classrooms open. Hochul said she's prepared to send additional resources to avoid interrupting in-person learning, *CBS News* reported.

"I think we know so much more about how to keep our children safe, and we also learned how devastating it is to keep children out of school, so I think we should use all the tools we have," Permar said. "Implement vaccination for all the school kids, also use testing, also use [masks](#) and our typical hand-washing and social distancing to keep kids in school, even with this rise in cases."

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [COVID-19](#).

SOURCE: *CBS News*

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