

COVID is more dangerous than flu for kids, study finds

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COVID-19 poses far more danger to kids than seasonal flu, a new study

confirms.

"We found the impact to pediatric hospitalization among the two [viruses](#) are not equivalent and, in fact, [children](#) admitted with COVID-19 or MIS-C experienced longer stays and required more invasive treatments like [mechanical ventilation](#) than children admitted with the flu," said principal investigator Dr. Steven Shein. He is chief of pediatric critical care medicine at University Hospitals Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital in Cleveland.

For the study, Shein and his colleagues analyzed data on critically ill children from 66 U.S. pediatric intensive care units.

They identified 1,959 admissions for a primary diagnosis of COVID-19 or COVID-related multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children ([MIS-C](#)) in the pandemic's first 15 months (April 2020 to June 2021), and 1,561 for flu in the two-year period before the pandemic (April 2018 to March 2020).

That means there were nearly twice as many COVID-19/MIS-C admissions per quarter (about 400) during the pandemic's first 15 months than flu admissions in the two years before it (about 200).

COVID-19/MIS-C patients had a higher risk of death, but actual death rates did not differ between the two groups, according to the findings.

Shein said researchers wanted to do the study because of the frequent [comparisons between COVID and flu](#), particularly in discussions of [public health measures](#).

The investigators noted that the flu patient data was gathered when there were no public health measures, while there was masking, social distancing and remote learning during collection of the COVID patient

data.

"It's important to note those measures did help to decrease critical illness from many respiratory viruses and nearly eliminated influenza admissions to pediatric ICUs," Shein said in a hospital news release.

"Without them in place, especially for this largely unvaccinated population, we can assume COVID-19 would have led to even more critically ill children," he said.

The study was published June 15 in *JAMA Network Open*.

More information: For more on children and COVID-19, go to the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#).

Steven L. Shein et al, Epidemiology and Outcomes of SARS-CoV-2 Infection or Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children vs Influenza Among Critically Ill Children, *JAMA Network Open* (2022). DOI: [10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.17217](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.17217)

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