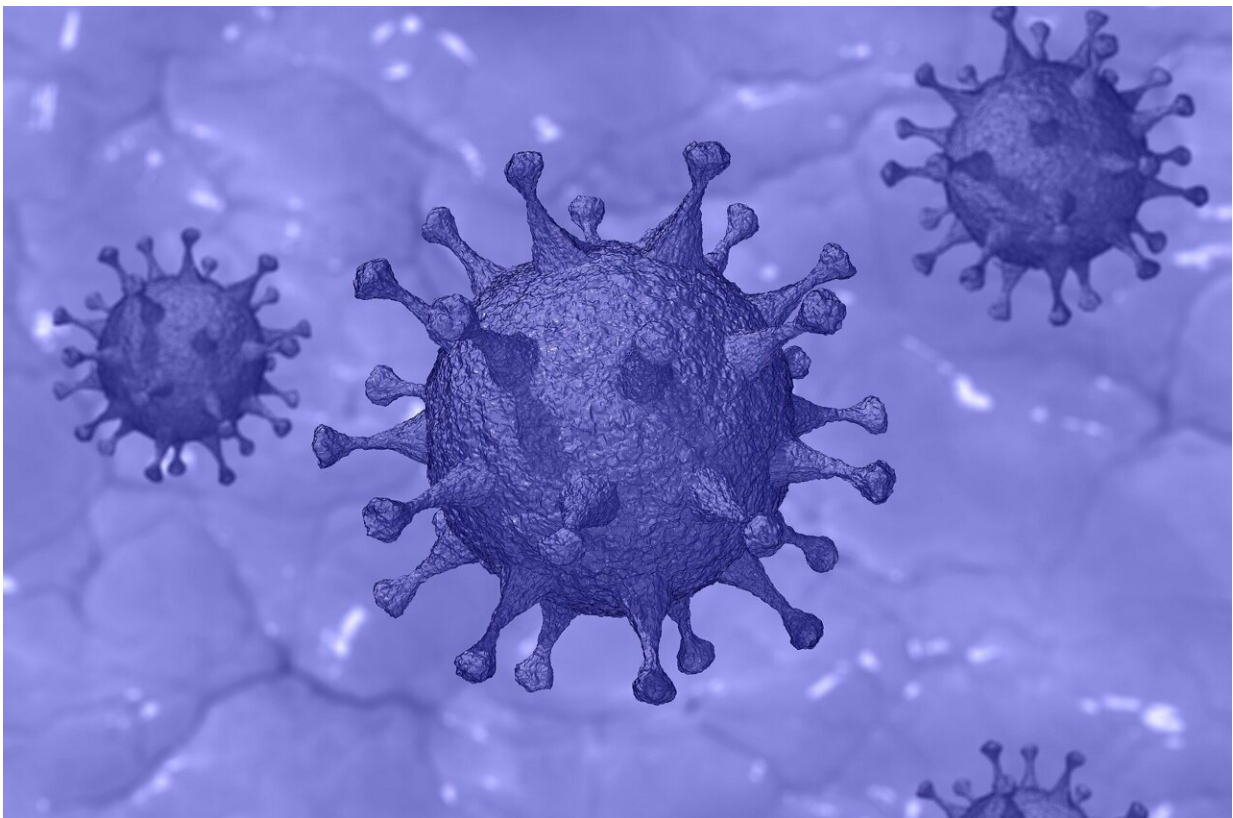


Safely treating children with COVID-19 at home helps take burden off hospitals, suggests study

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Children with COVID-19 can be treated safely at home, helping to take the burden off the hospital system, according to a new study.

The research, led by Murdoch Children's Research Institute and published in *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, found COVID-positive children with moderate symptoms or pre-existing [high-risk conditions](#) could be treated effectively via a Hospital-in-the-Home (HITH) program. Additionally, many more [sick children](#) without COVID-19 were treated at home during the pandemic.

Murdoch Children's Dr. Laila Ibrahim said the program took pressure off pediatric emergency departments and helped reduce COVID-19 transmission in [hospital](#) during the first two years of the pandemic.

"Children do better if it's possible to manage them at home and the infectious nature of SARS-CoV-2 increased the imperative to try to keep children out of hospital," she said.

"These findings reassure us that care at home has been safe and effective regardless of COVID strain and this takes the burden off inpatient care."

The study involved 3719 children, aged 0-18 years, referred from The Royal Children's Hospital or the Victorian Department of Health to HITH care from March 2020 to March 2022. It found 421 children with COVID-19 and 3,298 children without COVID-19 received treatment at home, many avoiding hospitalization altogether.

Of the COVID positive patients, 63 percent were high risk and 33 percent were moderately unwell. Only 10 percent of children were readmitted to hospital with just 5 percent needing medical intervention.

The research recorded a 21 percent increase in patients admitted to the HITH program and a 132 percent jump in telehealth appointments.

Murdoch Children's Associate Professor Penelope Bryant said prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, treatment of children in out-of-hospital

settings as an alternative to hospitalization was increasingly in demand.

"The benefits of being treated in the [home care](#) include improved child quality of life, higher parent satisfaction and avoidance of hospital-acquired infections. We advocate that where possible children should be cared for at home rather than hospital, knowing the severe impact of the pandemic on children's mental health," she said.

More information: Penelope A Bryant et al, Hospital bed replacement for acute care of children at home during the COVID-19 pandemic through a Hospital-in-the-Home programme, *Archives of Disease in Childhood* (2023). [DOI: 10.1136/archdischild-2022-325004](https://doi.org/10.1136/archdischild-2022-325004)

Provided by Murdoch Children's Research Institute

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