

# Study of children with COVID-19 suggests treatment differs by age

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A large international team of medical researchers has found that the severity of COVID-19 infections in children over the course of the pandemic varied by age and viral variant. In their study, reported in the

journal *JAMA Pediatrics*, the group analyzed clinical data for 31,785 children hospitalized due to COVID-19 infections from January 2020 to March 2022.

As the global pandemic emerged and then waned, numerous studies sought patterns that could be used as part of treatment for those infected. But, as the researchers with this new effort noted, such studies tended to lump children together as a single group when looking for trends.

In this new study, the team went back over the records of children admitted to the hospital from the earliest days of the pandemic to the mid and late pandemic to learn more about the impact of the disease on children of different ages. To that end, they combed through and analyzed the hospital records of 31,785 children up to age 18.

To better understand how children were impacted by infections, the researchers looked at [hospital admissions](#) compared to ICU admissions and also whether the children were given oxygen or put on ventilators. They then split the patients into three age groups: 0 to 6 months, 6 months to 5 years, and 5 years to 18 years. Data was obtained from hospitals in nine participating countries.

The research team found that as the pandemic progressed, hospitalizations increased with the arrival of each new major variant. They also found that for all three age groups, ICU admissions declined as the [pandemic](#) progressed. But there were differences in [children](#) who needed oxygen support or ventilation. For patients 0 to 6 months, ventilation support was needed less often but oxygen support did not decrease. For patients 6 months to 5 years, neither ventilation support nor oxygen support decreased. And for patients 5 years to 18 years, the need for both ventilation and [oxygen](#) support decreased.

The research team emphasizes the importance of considering the age of

a child when they are hospitalized with a COVID-19 infection when deciding on [treatment options](#).

**More information:** Yanshan Zhu et al, International Pediatric COVID-19 Severity Over the Course of the Pandemic, *JAMA Pediatrics* (2023). [DOI: 10.1001/jamapediatrics.2023.3117](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2023.3117)

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