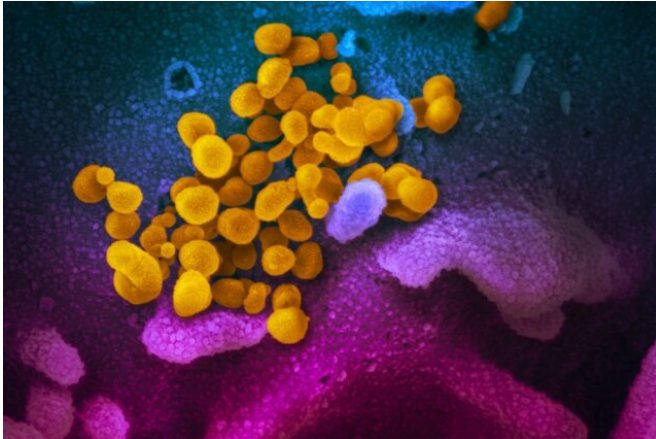


12-year-old infected with COVID-19 dies in Belgium

31 March 2020



This scanning electron microscope image shows SARS-CoV-2 (yellow)—also known as 2019-nCoV, the virus that causes COVID-19—isolated from a patient, emerging from the surface of cells (blue/pink) cultured in the lab. Credit: NIAID-RML

A 12-year-old girl confirmed infected with COVID-19 has died in Belgium, health officials said Tuesday.

Fatality from the virus at such a young age "is a very rare occurrence," said government spokesman Dr. Emmanuel Andre, adding that her death "shook us".

The girl had a fever for three days before her death, and tested positive for COVID-19, said another spokesman, Steven Van Gucht.

The government gave no other details, notably not saying whether she had any other underlying health problems.

The girl's school, located in the city of Ghent, issued a statement about the "sad news" and expressing condolences to the girl's family.

It added that the girl, whom it did not name, had not been at the school since March 13, just before a nationwide shutdown.

It was the first death of a child in the [coronavirus](#) crisis in Belgium, which has now recorded 705 deaths according to the latest official toll.

Last week, France reported the [death](#) of a 16-year-old girl from coronavirus in the greater Paris region.

Although serious COVID-19 infections are uncommon among the young, some exceptional cases have been taken to hospital intensive-care wards, as US health authorities have pointed out.

Belgium's toll on Tuesday represented a jump of nearly 200 fatalities from that given the previous day, which stood at 513.

It comprised 98 deaths recorded in the preceding 24-hour period, plus another 94 deaths over previous days that had not been counted in the national tally, Andre said.

The small EU country, with a population of 11.4 million, now has 12,775 cases of persons tested positive for COVID-19, of whom 4,920 have been hospitalised, including 1,021 in intensive care.

Hospitals in Brussels, the Dutch-speaking province of Limburg and the surroundings of Charleroi and Mons are now confronted with "a more complicated situation" as beds fill up, Andre said.

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