

- Virus

## Post-covid complications on rise among kids: Docs

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ALTHOUGH THE COMPREHENSIVE DATA INDICATES AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF CASES FOR CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS, THE MONTH-ON-MONTH DATA REVEALS THE SITUATION HAS NOW IMPROVED

MUMBAI: The number of Covid-19 cases among children in the city may have declined as compared to April, however, the hospitals are now witnessing a surge in post-covid complications among the recovered paediatric patients. In April, 4,351 children between the age group of 0-9 years contracted Covid-19. The number plunged to 3,139 in May. Similarly, in April, 12,277 teenagers in the age group of 10-19 years were diagnosed with Covid which decreased to 3,139 the next month, as per the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC). Dr Bela Verma, head of the paediatric department at Sir JJ Hospital said that in April, they received 33 paediatric cases. However, last month, they got only eight cases. Similarly, the civic-run King Edward Memorial (KEM) Hospital, Parel has witnessed around a 40% drop in paediatric patients with Covid-19 infection. At present, they have only seven paediatric patients. Doctors at Surya Hospital claim that they have recorded 30-40% fall in the hospitalisation of paediatric patients.

Dr Verma said, "In April, the rising cases of Covid-19 among children had become quite a concern for us. But now, hardly, we are getting any cases. Also, among the current cases, the severity of infection isn't as acute as witnessed in April."

Doctors have now raised the demand for early vaccination among children. "I hope Covid vaccine trials in children, which are already in progress, succeed and children get the vaccine at the earliest," Dr Sanjeev Ahuja, consultant paediatric at LH Hiranandani Hospital, Powai.

### Rise in post-covid syndromes

The hospitals across the city are reporting a surge in cases of a post-covid syndrome like Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome (MIS), Bell's palsy—temporary paralysis of facial muscles, long fever, and breathlessness.

Dr Ahuja said that he is receiving paediatric patients with MIS and Kawasaki like disease. “This occurs after four–six weeks of recovery when the RT-PCR report comes negative and the body has antibodies. Such cases have increased recently. Prompt diagnosis and treatment with immunoglobulin, steroids and cardiac evaluation are important,” he said.

Doctors have observed that the maximum number of kids who are facing post-covid syndromes are in the age group of 5-14. Many of them have cardiac related issues. Asymptomatic and mildly infected patients are having post-covid symptoms. “MIS is not dangerous or lifethreatening but it affects some children badly. It is a condition where different body parts can become inflamed, including the heart, lungs, kidneys, brain, skin, eyes, or gastrointestinal organs,” said Dr Bakul Parekh, past president of the Indian Academy of Paediatrics (IAP) and part of the paediatric Covid task force.

Symptoms of MIS are fever for three to five days, severe abdominal pain, sudden drop in blood pressure and loose motions. “Parents need to keep a watch on the recovered children if they keep having fever for more than three days. Earlier detection helps in better recovery,” said Dr Neil Castellino, chief of PICU, Surya Hospital.

The paediatric Covid task force has also taken note of the rising cases of post-covid syndromes among children. “Twice in a week, we are holding meetings with officials from the state government,” said Dr Parekh who has also cautioned against giving medicines over the counter without consulting doctors if the children are having red eyes, vomiting, having a convulsion, stomach ache or disorientations.