

- Virus

Higher diabetes risk among Covid positive children

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A recent study by researchers in the United States showing that Covid-19 may raise the risk of diabetes in children has set the alarm bells ringing in medical circles.

A team of researchers from the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), led by Dr Sharon Saydah, found that children below the age of 18 who have recovered from Covid-19 infection were more likely to develop diabetes than those with no history of the viral infection.

In Malaysia, the health authorities are concerned over the CDC findings, that were reported on Jan 7. In a post on March 12 on its Facebook page, the Health Ministry said admissions to paediatric intensive care units among children diagnosed with categories Four and Five Covid infections have increased by 94%.

Health experts have also expressed concern over a rise in Type 1 diabetes cases among children in Malaysia.

The CDC study found that the risk of developing diabetes was 166% higher in children who have had a Covid infection. It also found that new diagnoses of diabetes were 116% more likely to occur among those with Covid-19, compared with those with acute respiratory illnesses pre-pandemic.

Universiti Malaya senior consultant in paediatric endocrinology and diabetes Prof Dr Muhammad Yazid Jalaludin said although the incidence of diabetes among children in Malaysia was in general lower than that of Scandinavian nations and countries in temperate zones, many paediatric endocrinologists here were concerned over the higher number of children being diagnosed with diabetes currently, compared with pre-pandemic figures.

He suggested children aged below 18 who contract Covid-19 undergo tests to detect diabetes and other possible illnesses.

Meanwhile, KPJ Selangor Specialist Hospital paediatrician and paediatric cardiologist Datuk

Dr Zulkifli Ismail said there were still many parents who were worried about the side-effects of Pfizer-BioNTech's Comirnaty vaccine, which is developed using mRNA technology.

One of the reported side-effects is myocarditis, or inflammation of the heart muscle.

Zulkifli said in the US, where 8.7 million doses of the Comirnaty vaccine have been administered to children aged five to 11, only 11 cases of heart inflammation were reported.

As of March 9, some one million children in Malaysia in that age group have been vaccinated under the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme for Children. – Bernama