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Omicron infections may spare young hearts

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WASHINGTON: The Omicron variant of the coronavirus does not have a negative effect on cardiovascular health in young adults who have been vaccinated, a study suggests.

Earlier variants have had a detrimental effect on patients' hearts and blood vessels, and researchers expected to see similar patterns when they compared 23 young adults with Omicron breakthrough infections diagnosed within the past six weeks to 13 vaccinated young adults who never had Covid-19.

The average age of study participants was early- to mid-20s. As reported in the American Journal of Physiology – Heart and Circulatory Physiology, markers of cardiovascular health included blood vessel function and responsiveness to stimuli, stiffness of artery walls, heart rate variability, and the heart's responses to changes in blood pressure.

“Contrary to our hypothesis,” the researchers said, “there were no differences in any of these parameters between healthy, vaccinated young adults who contracted Covid-19 during the Omicron wave and those who never had Covid”.

The finding that “not all variants may be detrimental to cardiovascular health in young, otherwise healthy adults ... is all very promising,” they said. “However, there is some recent evidence that cardiovascular health may still be impacted in the long term. Therefore, follow-up studies will be needed.”