

- COVID-19

## DIABETES RISK FOR KIDS WITH COVID

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CHILDREN who contract COVID-19 have an increased risk of developing type 1 diabetes (T1D) within six months, experts warn.



Researchers at Case Western Reserve University analyzed health records of more than 1 million patients aged 18 and younger, who were diagnosed with the bug between March 2020 and December 2021 in 14 countries — including the U.S.

The team compared the group with children who developed non-COVID lung infections during the same period. They found within six months of contracting COVID, 123 children received a diagnosis of T1D compared to 72 patients in the non-COVID group — an increase of 72 percent in new diagnoses! T1D is an autoimmune disease that leaves the body unable to regulate blood sugar levels, and is a leading cause of blindness, kidney failure, heart attacks, strokes and lower limb amputations.

Case Western Professor Pamela Davis explains, "It occurs mostly because the body's immune defenses attack the cells in the pancreas that produce insulin, stopping production and causing the disease. "COVID has been suggested to increase autoimmune responses, and our finding reinforces that suggestion."

The CDC says about 244,000 Americans under age 20 live with T1D. To survive, patients must take insulin, via multiple daily injections or a pump, for the rest of their lives. Symptoms of T1D, which can occur suddenly, include excessive thirst and urination, constant hunger, weight loss, vision changes and fatigue.

"Families with high risk of type 1 diabetes in their children should be especially alert for symptoms following COVID, and pediatricians should be alert for an influx for those who have it, and we may see a substantial increase in this disease in the coming months." Researchers say further study is needed to examine if the increased risk of new onset T1D after COVID in pediatric patients persists and how to treat COVID-19– associated T1D in kids.