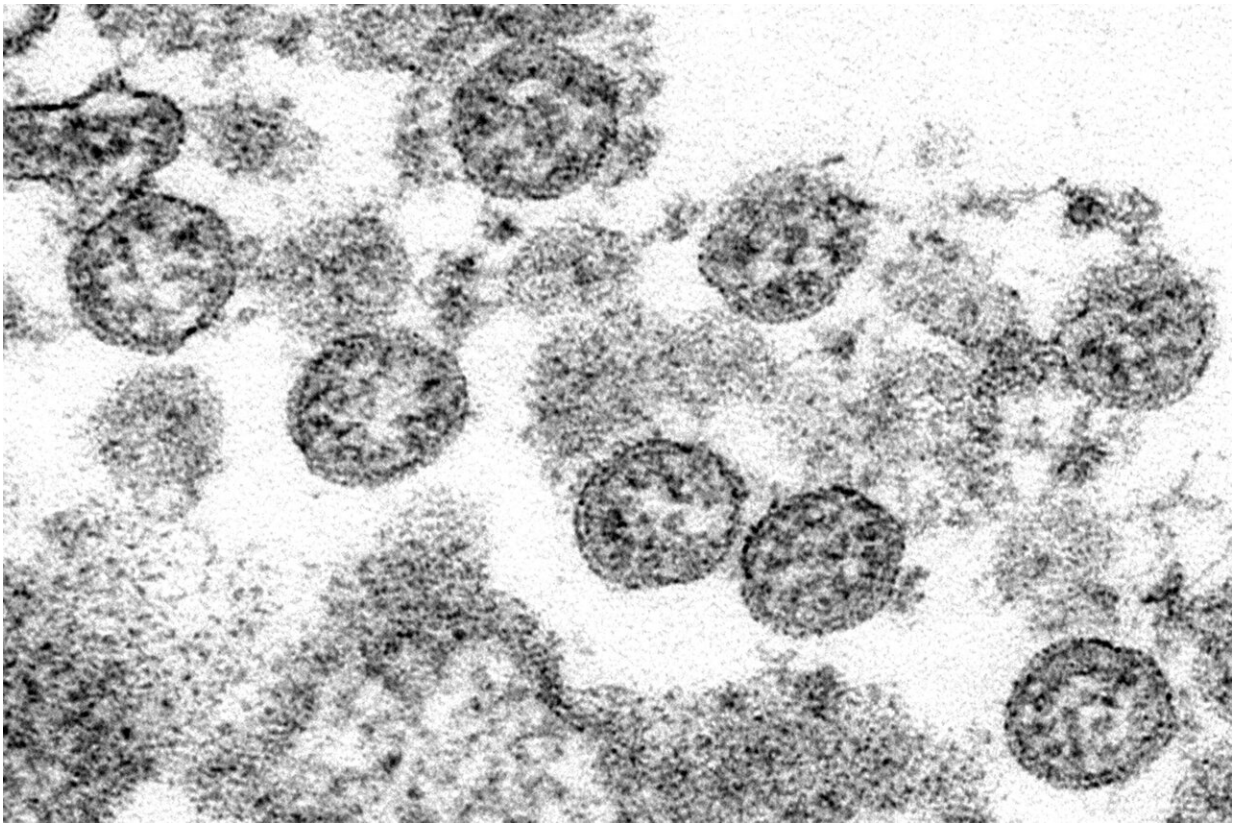


# Rare inflammatory condition affects some kids with COVID-19

May 7 2020, by Lindsey Tanner

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This 2020 electron microscope made available by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention image shows the spherical coronavirus particles from the first U.S. case of COVID-19. On Monday, May 4, 2020, New York City health authorities issued an alert to doctors about severe inflammatory condition possibly linked with COVID-19 has been found in a cluster of U.S. children in New York City after first being reported in Europe. On Wednesday, New York said 64 potential cases had been reported to the state. Fever, abdominal pain and skin rashes are common symptoms of the unnamed condition, which has features

similar to Kawasaki disease and toxic shock syndrome. (C.S. Goldsmith, A. Tamin/CDC via AP)

Dozens of U.S. children have been hospitalized with a serious inflammatory condition possibly linked with the coronavirus and first seen in Europe.

New York authorities announced Wednesday that 64 potential cases had been reported to the state. The [advisory](#) followed an alert earlier this week about 15 cases in New York City.

A few other U.S. [children](#) have been affected during the pandemic, including a 6-month-old infant in California diagnosed with COVID-19 and Kawasaki disease, a rare condition that causes swelling in blood vessels.

Fever, [abdominal pain](#) and skin rashes are [common symptoms](#), while some New York children have developed heart inflammation requiring intensive care. Most had evidence of current or past coronavirus infections.

Medical groups in Britain, Italy and Spain warned doctors last month to look out for the condition.

Some doctors say the New York cases increase the likelihood that the syndrome is a rare complication of COVID-19 although that remains to be proven.

"It raises our antenna a bit and tells us we need to be vigilant about unusual and more severe complications of COVID-19" in children, said Dr. Larry Kocielek, an infectious disease specialist at Lurie Children's

Hospital in Chicago.

In a news release Wednesday, the American Heart Association emphasized that the condition is rare.

"We want to reassure parents—this appears to be uncommon. While Kawasaki disease can damage the heart or [blood vessels](#), the heart problems usually go away in five or six weeks, and most children fully recover," said Dr. Jane Newburger, an association member and director of the Kawasaki Program at Boston Children's Hospital.

At least 3,000 U.S. children are diagnosed with Kawasaki disease each year. It's most common in kids younger than 6 and in boys. It was first reported in Japanese children and occurs worldwide.

The unusual syndrome prompted a conference call last weekend with researchers, doctors and U.S. and international health officials, the Kawasaki Disease Foundation said in a statement Thursday. The participants concluded that affected children should be treated by specialists at hospitals where intensive care is readily available since some children with the inflammatory condition become sicker rapidly.

Doctors still believe that most children with COVID-19 develop only mild illness.

Most published research on the coronavirus in kids is from China and does not include mention of the inflammation syndrome.

Dr. Sonja Rasmussen, a former U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention specialist now at the University of Florida, said more published data are needed to clarify how COVID-19 affects U.S. children and that the possibility of severe disease should not be dismissed.

"I don't think we can be complacent about COVID-19 in children," Rasmussen said.

Dr. Sean O'Leary, a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics' infectious [disease](#) committee, said scientists and doctors in the U.S. and other countries are collaborating to better understand the inflammatory condition. But he emphasized that it has not been reported in most children with the [coronavirus](#).

"This is not something parents need to panic about," he said.

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