

IS THE CORONAVIRUS DANGEROUS TO CHILDREN & YOUNG ADULTS?

The CDC has warned that younger people could suffer severe health risks from Covid-19, the disease caused by the Coronavirus. Health officials have stated that people who are older, whose immune systems are weakened, and who have underlying diseases are at a higher risk of becoming infected. Preliminary data from Europe cautions the public that younger adults can get very sick as well. New York leads the nation in cases and **55%** of those infected are between **18-49** years of age. This alarming data should be proof to young citizens that age is not a factor.

So far there have been no reports of fatal infections in children under 10, however those same reports say that one teenager, a 14-year old boy in China, has died. Children can get infected by the virus, but experience much milder symptoms than older adults. It is not clear what role they have in spreading the virus. In Europe the elderly and others at risk for serious infections took more protective steps to avoid catching Coronavirus, whereas millennials did not; the data reflects exposure, and does not target one group over another. Health authorities have argued that younger people who think they won't be affected by the virus are hurting efforts to stop the spread and they are putting others at risk. Also, at a World Health Organization (*WHO*) briefing Wednesday, health officials stressed that cases of severe illness were not restricted to older people.

“The idea that this is a disease that causes death in older people, we need to be very, very careful with,” said Mike Ryan, head of the *WHO* emergency program, who noted that almost 20% of deaths in South Korea were in people younger than 60.

INFANT CARE

Infants are at risk in their first year of life and are more vulnerable to illnesses and infections. A study showed that about 30% of “severe” childhood Covid-19 cases and more than half of “critical” Covid-19 cases were among children less than 1 year old. Though the overall numbers were small — 7 infants had critical illness and 33 suffered severe illness — consequentially, it shows that younger children faced a higher likelihood of more dangerous outcomes. The high risk for babies may be because they are still building up their immune systems. As they grow, their immune system matures and better protects them from potential threats. When a baby is born, it retains some infection resistance in the form of antibodies from its mother. That protection wanes over the first few months of life as the baby builds up its own defenses. The immune system of a child is still untrained to being exposed to all sorts of environmental stimuli for the first time — bacteria, pollen, and dust. To prevent their bodies from overreacting to otherwise harmless microorganisms, their immune reactions are tamped down and err on the side of a decreased response to infections.

Scientists in China reported that Coronavirus does not spare the very young. In the first retrospective study of Covid-19 in the country where the pandemic began, they count 2,143 cases in children. Of those, the *Journal of Pediatrics* reported that more than 90% were mild or moderate, confirming earlier observations that children are at lower risk of severe disease. That may be because the molecule that allows the virus to enter human cells seems to be less developed in children.

Preventing infections is the best way to protect everyone, regardless of age. Hand-washing and social distancing is an important tactic when it comes to reducing the spread of the virus. School closing comes with a price however, because they are a source of food and supervision when parents are at work. The CDC has said that school closures under four weeks will most likely not have a meaningful effect on the spread of the virus, but hand washing and isolation are more effective. Remember, the **STRESS** caused by the Coronavirus is going to affect your health, so practice patience, mediation and spiritual enlightenment to survive this global Pandemic.

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