

WHO says acute hepatitis cases in children now reported in 11 countries

April 25 2022



The World Health Organization said it is investigating an outbreak of

acute hepatitis among children that now involves 11 countries, including the United States.

Among the 169 reported cases, at least one child has died from this inflammation of the liver and 17 children needed [liver transplants](#), the WHO said Saturday in a [statement](#).

"It is not yet clear if there has been an increase in hepatitis cases, or an increase in awareness of hepatitis cases that occur at the expected rate but go undetected," the WHO said. "While adenovirus is a possible hypothesis, investigations are ongoing for the causative agent."

The symptoms "among identified cases is acute hepatitis with markedly elevated liver enzymes," the statement added.

[Hepatitis](#) is typically caused by a virus. Adenoviruses are common, can spread between people and can cause people to be mildly or severely ill. Among these recent infections, adenoviruses have been [detected](#) in at least 74 cases, but they typically don't cause severe hepatitis in healthy people. The common viruses that cause acute viral hepatitis, including hepatitis viruses A, B, C, D and E, have not been detected in any of these cases, according to the WHO.

While most of the children did not have a fever, many reported [gastrointestinal symptoms](#) such as [abdominal pain](#), diarrhea and vomiting "preceding presentation with severe acute hepatitis," as well as increased levels of [liver enzymes](#) and jaundice, *CNN* reported.

Most of the 169 cases were reported in the United Kingdom, which had 114. Nine cases were [reported](#) by the Alabama Department of Health last week.

Investigators are also aware of 13 cases in Spain, 12 in Israel, and

smaller numbers in Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and Romania. The children are between the ages of 1 month and 16, *CNN* reported.

The liver processes nutrients, filters the blood and helps fight infection, and its function can be affected when it's either inflamed or damaged.

The WHO said the investigation needs to focus on "increased susceptibility amongst [young children](#) following a lower level of circulation of adenovirus during the COVID-19 pandemic, the potential emergence of a novel adenovirus, as well as SARS-CoV-2 co-infection."

Late week, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [issued](#) a health advisory about the acute cases of hepatitis with unknown cause.

The CDC recommended providers consider adenovirus testing in children with hepatitis when the cause is unknown. Testing the blood in whole, rather than just [blood plasma](#), may be more sensitive, the CDC advised.

More information: The U.S. National Library of Medicine has more on [hepatitis](#).

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Citation: WHO says acute hepatitis cases in children now reported in 11 countries (2022, April 25) retrieved 22 November 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-04-acute-hepatitis-cases-children-countries.html>

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