

# If your child had COVID, there's double the risk of diabetes



If your child contracts **COVID-19**, they'll have **twice** the risk of developing **diabetes** during the **months** after infection, warned Dr. Óscar Tamez, a pediatric infectious disease specialist at [TecSalud](#).

*"If (the child) wasn't genetically predisposed, had a healthy diet and lifestyle, **COVID comes along and increases their risk of diabetes two-fold compared to those** who never tested positive," he said.*

Dr. Tamez said that this situation, which has been reported in **medical studies**, adds to other **health problems** among the **child population in Mexico**.

*"It's something really important that could have repercussions on public health. Even more so, as Mexico's child population has the **highest obesity and diabetes rates** in the world," he said.*



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### What types of diabetes are there?

Even though diabetes is commonly related to “being chubby”, Dr. Tamez explained that it can be caused by different factors. Depending on these factors, it’s diagnosed as **Type 1 or Type 2**.

**Type 1 diabetes** is a **chronic (lifelong) autoimmune disease** in which there’s a high level of sugar (glucose) in the blood, since the body doesn’t produce **insulin**, a hormone that regulates glucose.

In **Type 2 diabetes**, the body doesn’t **use insulin efficiently**, which is caused by poor diet and a sedentary lifestyle, among other factors.

*“If pediatric patients have **Type 1 diabetes**, this is due to **their pancreatic cells being unregulated** and stopping doing their job, which doesn’t have much to do with their diet, weight, or physical activity, but is rather **a genetic problem**,”* he said.

In the case of children who contract COVID-19, this disease could be a **trigger for earlier pancreatic injury**, he added.



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### How can I tell if my child is starting to develop diabetes?

Dr. Tamez said that the **warning signs** we must look out for in children in order to **detect diabetes early on** include:

- Unexplained **weight loss**
- **Frequent** urination
- **Increased thirst**, asking for more fluids than usual
- **Fatigue or exhaustion**
- **Blurred vision**
- **Numbness or tingling** in their hands or feet
- **Ulcers** that don't heal
- **Seizures**

*“You must monitor these **obvious warning signs**: make sure your children aren't **consuming more fluids** than usual, aren't **frequently going to the bathroom** to urinate, or that if you used to change their diaper **7 times a day**, you now do it **14 times a day**.”*

*“Also, look out for **unintentional weight loss**. If they don't suffer from epilepsy and they have a **seizure** that comes out of nowhere, these are all factors that make us think of diabetes,” he added.*

Dr. Tamez pointed out that this problem of diabetes in children due to COVID-19 can be triggered both **during infection** as well as **several months later**.

“During acute infection, **diabetic ketoacidosis** can develop. This triggers a metabolic problem in which your body enters a state in which the **pH** (which measures the degree of acidity or alkalinity) drops very low and **there’s no regulation of glucose and bicarbonate in the blood.**”



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### **What should I do if there are suspicious symptoms?**

The specialist **recommended that parents be alert** in case they detect any of these symptoms in their children **after the acute phase of infection**, and even **for several months later**.

“Apparently, everything is fine after recovery, but we’ve seen that **over the following 6 months**, they have this **increased risk of diabetes**, two times more than those not testing positive,” he added.

If they were to detect any of these diabetes warning signs, he suggested **documenting the characteristics of the symptoms** and going to a doctor to carry out the corresponding assessment to confirm or rule out the disease.

“Once it’s been diagnosed, **it’s no longer reversible**. Fortunately, **both types can be controlled**. You can control it pretty well, either with insulin or with medication.



*“There are also some **mild cases that can be treated with the support of a pediatric endocrinologist**, with diet, exercise, and lifestyle changes for controlling glucose,”* said Dr. Tamez.

*“We’ve seen that over the following 6 months, they have this increased risk of diabetes, two times more than those not testing positive.”*

### **Be alert for multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children**

If your son or daughter has had **COVID-19**, you should be on the lookout for **21 to 28 days** after infection, as they might show **symptoms** of what’s known as **multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children**.

This syndrome is **associated with SARS-CoV-2, but it isn’t COVID-19**. It can cause inflammation to children’s hearts, lungs, kidneys, brains, skin, eyes, or gastrointestinal organs.

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