

There will be no deficiency in the care and infrastructure required for children catching COVID-19: Member, NITI Aayog

2% - 3% children who get infected may need hospitalization: Dr. V.K. Paul

Guidelines for dealing with COVID in Children to be out soon

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A National Expert Group has been formed to review COVID-19 infections in children and approach the pandemic in a renewed way, to strengthen the nation's preparedness. The Group has examined signs which was not available 4 – 5 months before. It has also considered available data, clinical profile, the country's experience, disease dynamics, nature of the virus and the pandemic and has come up with Guidelines, which will be publicly released soon. This was informed by Dr. V.K. Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog, at the Union Health Ministry's media briefing on COVID-19, held at National Media Centre, PIB Delhi today. "While we have been systematically reviewing scientific developments in this area, the Group has been formed to take an updated view of the situation."

Noting that paediatric COVID-19 is gaining our attention, he informed that there will be no deficiency in the care and infrastructure required for children who may get infected. "COVID-19 in children is often asymptomatic and rarely requires hospitalization. However, changes in epidemiological dynamics or viral behaviour can change the situation and increase prevalence of infection. No undue burden has been placed on paediatric care infrastructure so far. However, it is possible that 2% - 3% of children who get infected may need hospitalization."

Two Forms of Paediatric COVID-19

Dr. Paul informs that COVID-19 in children may take two forms:

1. In one form, symptoms like infection, cough, fever and pneumonia may occur, followed in some cases by hospitalization.
2. In the second case, after 2-6 weeks of getting COVID, which may mostly be asymptomatic, a small proportion of children may show symptoms like fever, body rash, and inflammation of eyes or conjunctivitis, breathing troubles, diarrhoea, vomiting and so on. It may not remain restricted like pneumonia affecting lungs. It spreads to various parts of the body. This is called Multi-System Inflammatory Syndrome. This is a post-COVID symptom. At this time, virus will not be found in the body and RT-PCR test will also come negative. But antibody test will show that the child had been infected by COVID.

Guidelines are being formulated to treat this unique disease found in some children, which presents itself as an emergency situation. Though treatment is not difficult, it has to be timely, adds Dr. Paul.

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