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First came a viral storm. Now, we have puzzling superinfections.



Infection with Streptococcus pyogenes - or group A strep, for short - typically produces mild symptoms, such as rash, fever or swollen tonsils leading to the eponymous strep throat. (Getty Images)


2.1k



Ariana Eunjung Cha

Wed, December 21, 2022 at 6:51 AM EST · 8 min read

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Coronavirus

The seven kids with oddball symptoms arrived at Children's Mercy Kansas City Hospital in Missouri in quick succession this past month. One complained of an eye that was "stuck." Another


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STREP CASES IN KIDS

CDC investigating possible increase in invasive group A strep infection

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be related, recalled Angela Myers, the director of infectious diseases. But when the lab tests came back, they all pointed to the same culprit.

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It was a potentially lethal form of strep A.

"We were very surprised," Myers said. "We just don't see this many together in such a short time."

Infection with *Streptococcus pyogenes* - or group A strep, for short - typically produces mild symptoms, such as rash, fever or swollen tonsils leading to the eponymous strep throat. But in recent months, cases related to a rare invasive form of the common bacteria have been popping up across the United States, as well as Europe, often in connection with sometimes confusing symptoms, including skin rashes, fever, a racing heart and unexplained swelling.

The first confirmed pediatric deaths in this country, in two young children in the Denver area, were reported last week. At least 16 children have died of it in the United Kingdom, seven in the Netherlands and two in France.

The rise of invasive strep A is one of a number of unusual ways pathogens have been interacting with us - and each other - amid the end of coronavirus-era social distancing and masking this year. Both the World Health Organization and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said they are investigating the cases, including whether the viral storm that has been



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secondary bacterial infection to take hold and intensify its effects in some cases.

Minnesota health officials said they had seen 46 cases of invasive strep A in all ages in November, more than double the average 20 cases in previous months. Colorado reported that it was investigating not only a rise in invasive strep A cases, but also a possible increase in other severe or invasive bacterial infections in children.

Texas Children's Hospital said it has seen more than 60 patients with invasive strep A in October and November - a fourfold increase from the same period the previous year. James Versalovic, pathologist-in-chief for the medical center, said many of the affected children had current or recent viral infections. But, he said, it is still too early to rule out other factors that may be contributing to the seriousness of their illnesses.

"It could be we have altered patterns of immunity due to the pandemic that may have increased our vulnerability. But it could also be . . . different variants" of strep, he said. "It could be a combination of factors. No one knows."

- - -

Unlike SARS-CoV-2, strep A is something humans have battled for centuries.

It has variously been described, incorrectly, throughout history as being associated with phenomena such as comets and eclipses, or the introduction of nonliving matter into humans. It wasn't until 1874 that Austrian surgeon Theodor

of a patient's body, unlike viruses, which are a collection of molecules that can only replicate in a host. Both are transmitted in similar ways - through air, water, food and living things.

Several million people in the United States are infected each year with strep A, and in our modern world, with its ample supply of antibiotics, it is mostly a nuisance. It usually translates into a sore throat, and maybe a missed day of school or work during the 24 hours it takes to stop being contagious after taking antibiotics such as penicillin and amoxicillin.

"The good news is that we know how to treat it and how to test for it," said Kristin Moffitt, an infectious-disease expert at Boston Children's Hospital who studies bacterial infections.

"Normally it's not a source of serious concern that I would be hyper-anxious about."

But in a small number of cases, strep A can turn dangerous when it invades parts of the body where bacteria don't normally exist. When it goes into such areas, including the blood, cerebrospinal fluid, bone marrow and organs such as the brain and heart, it can spread quickly and kill.

The first reports of unusual activity as a result of invasive strep A, mostly involving children 5 and under, came from the Netherlands between March and July. It was not only the number of cases and their severity, doctors said in a preprint research paper posted Dec. 13, but also the fact that many of the patients had been co-infected with viruses such as the flu or chickenpox. (Unlike in the United States, vaccinations for varicella, which cause chickenpox, are not a part of the

systemic infection or pneumonia. But this year, many were diagnosed as suffering from necrotizing fasciitis, a flesh-eating disease that involves bacteria that destroys tissue under the skin. Physicians Evelien B. van Kempen, Patricia C.J. Bruijning-Verhagen, and their co-authors urged the public to be aware that early recognition and prompt treatment may save lives.

"Clinicians and parents should be vigilant and aware of unusual pediatric presentations," they wrote.

Serious illness in children has also been reported in the United Kingdom, Netherlands, France, Ireland and Sweden, but the patterns aren't always the same. In the U.K., doctors reported a surge in scarlet fever - which is also caused by strep A bacteria - at around the same time as the invasive cases. But that wasn't seen in the Netherlands.

Several hospitals in the United States said they are unaware of unusual scarlet fever activity in their areas.

Figuring out what's going on in the United States is trickier than in some other countries because of the lack of a national health-care system that facilitates tracking of cases. CDC spokeswoman Kate Grusich said in an email that it is too soon to say whether case numbers "are just returning to pre-pandemic levels, or if they are rising beyond what we would normally expect."

The "CDC is watching these data closely, and talking with surveillance sites and hospitals in multiple states to learn more about any trends," she said.

The email listservs for pediatricians and infectious-disease specialists in this country started blowing up in October with a question from a doctor in the Midwest: Was anyone else seeing an increase in invasive strep A?

The responses were mixed, as expected, given that such cases tend to cluster. Boston Children's had not seen anything concerning. But physicians in Kansas City, Houston and Denver had.

At Texas Children's, Versalovic said some children have come in with low blood pressure and septic shock, some with bacterial pneumonia, and still others with skin infections. Several were so ill that they required intensive care. He worries some of the cases are being missed. To diagnose invasive strep A, doctors must take samples of a patient's blood, skin, or fluid in the lungs or other areas. But if a child needs emergency care, there may not be time to consider the cause of the illness.

Invasive strep A "does not follow a simple linear progression," he said.

In Denver, Samuel Dominguez, an infectious-disease specialist at Children's Hospital Colorado and a professor at the University of Colorado School of Medicine, said the cases he had seen were "across the age spectrum" in children, noting that they may be more susceptible because bacteria tend to colonize more aggressively in their throats and skin than in adults.

Dominguez sought to balance reassurances that this is a relatively rare infection with calls to be on the lookout for warning signs.

Mercy in Missouri have recovered with treatment, but she urged parents to make sure their children's vaccinations are up to date to prevent a viral infection that may open the doors to a more severe bacterial one. "I think there are a lot of things at play we don't fully know yet," she said.

One of the tricky things about the illness is that it can look so different in different children, she said. The child having trouble moving their eyeball had an infection of the soft tissues of the eye socket; the one with the lump behind the ear, an infection of the bone in that area; and the third patient, a collection of pus in the back of the throat.

Myers urged parents to err on the side of caution.

"If a child looks sicker than they should be after they develop a fever, it's always a good idea to bring them to a doctor if they have trouble breathing, or you notice something else - even a swollen eye," she said.

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RubberDucky ...

7 hours ago

I had this. We had to coax the doctor to run a strep test because his entire team kept insisting the sore throat and 102F fever were covid. The medical community isn't full of geniuses or problem solvers. Bet more people shared that experience and now it's run rapidly.

Reply · 82 · 11 · Share

17 replies

jim ...

8 hours ago

Strep has been around forever and is just getting more immune to our antibiotics

Reply · 60 · 6 · Share

6 replies

Brian ...

7 hours ago

Let's consider several word combinations in this article: "puzzling superinfections," "oddball symptoms," "very surprised," "unexplained swelling," "unusual ways," "no one knows..."

Does anyone see a theme here? The health authorities just can't quite understand what's happening. Their bewilderment creates in my mind the face of an actor in a low-budget B movie trying to appear that they're genuinely surprised and can't understand what's going on. Maybe what's needed is some critical thinking by the world's citizens?

Reply · 74 · 18 · Share

Aasgar & Vianney ...

6 hours ago

These are the same health authorities that sent elderly patients back to nursing homes while still in the infectious stage of Covid-19. I don't expect much from our current batch of "health authorities"

Reply · 18 · 6 · Share

1 reply

SirReel ...

5 hours ago

Fear has become the dominant narrative.

Also, thinking is hard.

Reply · 12 · 2 · Share

Dot ...

4 hours ago

Maybe some of the doctors are too young to recognize a virus that's been around for ages. I had strep throat when I was a kid and then once as a young adult. No guessing from the doctors. They KNEW what it was. Antibiotics took care of it and a week home from school and work.

Reply

2

1

Share

JP

5 hours ago

I was just about to write the same thing Brian. There have been a lot of articles just like this the past month. Whoever is writing this narrative (I'm going to assume it's big pharma since they have the most to gain) appears to be conditioning the masses for some yet unknown super bug yet to come. It'll only stop once doctors and scientists aren't censored anymore and are allowed to show why this is all bee-ess.

Reply

6

5

Share

2 replies

Show 7 more replies

One2

8 hours ago

Let me put this into perspective for you. A series of 2 doses for the original jab. To date 2 boosters. CDC currently recommending a 3rd dose of the vaccine and if a new variant comes out again, they will have to update the booster. For a total of SIX JABS by the middle of next year.

Reply

45

10

Share

14 replies

WB

2 hours ago

Gee more out of control illnesses popping up in eye catching numbers. I wonder what influenced or outright caused this? Of course not a single study will ever be done, my own anecdotal experience tells me exactly what could be causing this.

Reply

17

5

Share

4 replies

Susan S

8 hours ago

We were locked down for almost two years. If you're not exposed to a certain amount of germs, your body doesn't know how to fight them. We probably won't learn anything from these past two years because there's too much \$\$ in big pharma and the control of the government.

Reply

69

21

Share

7 replies

D

5 hours ago

We are still recovering from a pandemic. We have a shortage of medication but our border is wide open!!! Has the thought crossed anyone's mind that the millions that are just entering our country could be bringing more illness to our country? I think we've reached a point where we are in a state of emergency and need to completely close the border. Absolutely no more entry!

Reply

42

6

Share

5 replies

Reply · 37 · 11 · Share

3 replies

WatchDog ...

8 hours ago

If parents hadn't been in the face of Doctors and NP's demanding antibiotics for everything and anything then there would be less incidence of resistance to existing antibiotics. Then of course we also had the masking of young children which denied them the natural exposure to build immunity.

Reply · 22 · 13 · Share

4 replies

Walt ...

3 hours ago

Puzzling super infections not puzzling at all we let millions of people in this country illegally cozy up to China who have been poisoning us for decades. Conjure up gain of function Frankenstein lab viruses have a Congress that is more impressed with our taxes and the IRS expansion than pursuing common sense health and safety practices. This will get worse and we welcome it.

Reply · 18 · 5 · Share

3 replies

Ooh Blah Dee ...

8 hours ago

I see these stories and think back to just a few years ago when all the antibacterial soap and deodorant had to remove the Triclosan out of fear that more resistant bacteria might develop. That may have worked out as planned, but certainly not as promised.

Reply · 15 · 6 · Share

w ...

8 hours ago

What? Antibacterial things and Purell are literally why strains develop. In the late 90's this was known, then a few years ago the government actually released the info. People need to be less afraid of germs and let their bodies actually fight off things.

Reply · 40 · 6 · Share

3 replies

Show 2 more replies

DOG ...

8 hours ago

Sure it has nothing to do with keeping them at home for two years as well as forcing them to mask up for 3 years.

Reply · 89 · 30 · Share

12 replies

ReneD ...

2 hours ago

It just may be that the prophecies in the Bible may be coming to pass. It says that the "beginning of sorrows" will herald a terrible

lee

4 hours ago

So what is the chances that the millions of people streaming across the borders is contributing to the SUDDEN rise in disease's that popping up? Judging by the fact that the democrats don't care about 100,000 fentanyl deaths, they won't care about the disease coming across the border either. Got to keep the power even if people just happen to pass away.

Reply · 22 · 5 · Share

5 replies

Elizabeth

3 hours ago

This happened last year to my daughter she had a cough after strep A infection, for 11 months. Here it went to her lungs and was antibiotics resistant. After a month on antibiotics, she went back to school and caught strep two more times and it went to her lungs again.

Reply · 3 · Share

1 reply

Colin

7 hours ago

This is what happens when huge swaths of the population has their immune system reduced to levels that inhibit the way common infections are overcome. The Covid vaccine works by first reducing the body's ability to recognize the synthetic T-cell introduced into the immune system. Hence people just receiving the vaccine are recommended to stay masked for a longer period. Unfortunately, the shot (not a vaccine) only reduces the symptoms and therefore turns the recipient into a walking petri dish, allowing mutations to form an a rate not seen before. No surprise the vaccinated are now experiencing many health problems.

Reply · 16 · 13 · Share

5 replies

Ray

8 hours ago

Were all of these kids up to date on their Covid jabs?

Reply · 29 · 1 · Share

3 replies

This comment violated our policy.

Michael

7 hours ago

Doctors are supposed to weigh the risk of the disease vs possible side effects of taking medicine. If this simple rule was followed, no child would have been vaccinated since we learned very early that children were the least susceptible to serious complications of Covid.

Reply · 19 · 6 · Share

1 reply

Show 1 more reply

Scott

8 hours ago

none of us regret NOT taking the Jab.

Reply ·

121

30

 · Share

26 replies

Mark

8 hours ago

What if this is from all the new "Americans" we pass daily in public that is the cause? We've seen resurgence in illnesses that have been rare if at all seen here for decades.

Reply ·

11

3

 · Share

2 replies

Tammy

7 hours ago

Do you honestly think the government would allow information to be published that will show the true damage of what the vaccine have done to the public. It would cause a violent uprising.
(Edited)

Reply ·

13

6

 · Share

1 reply

Silver Eagle

8 hours ago

no worry Pfizer will come up with jab to save us all.

Reply ·

34

6

 · Share

5 replies

Jerry

8 hours ago

At the Oct. 22, 2020, debate against then-President Donald Trump, Joe Biden said anyone who is responsible for 220,000 deaths from COVID should not be president.
Now, here it is August 2022 and these 220,000 deaths have increased to 1,031,500
By my calculations, Joe Biden is now responsible for 635,500 deaths — more than the 396,000 who died while Trump was president. By his own thought process, Biden should have resigned several months ago, especially since he told us he was going to fix this.

Reply ·

44

17

 · Share

7 replies

Eagle

8 hours ago

Weird how all of these everyday viruses are giving a segment of the population so much trouble all of a sudden.

Reply ·

40

8

 · Share

(Edited)

Reply · 54 · 19 · Share

7 replies

Jerry

8 hours ago

For many, electing Joe Biden represented a return to normality, moderation, unity and competence. Unfortunately, his presidency has only ushered in hyper-divisiveness, immoderate policy, venality and staggering incompetence. The list of Biden's failures is long, and it grows daily. But here are the highlights of that list.
Another Biden failure has been his mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic. Biden inherited the enormous benefit of coronavirus vaccines produced by the Trump administration's Operation Warp Speed. His response to the COVID pandemic thereafter has been characterized by frequent policy reversals. The most recent of which is the unconstitutional ordering of vaccine mandates—a move that, previously, the president said he would never make. As a result, the country is faced with the resignation and firing of police officers, firefighters, health care workers and armed forces personnel. Even worse is that, despite the availability of vaccines, more people have died of COVID-19 during Biden's presidency than during Trump's presidency

Reply · 33 · 19 · Share

6 replies

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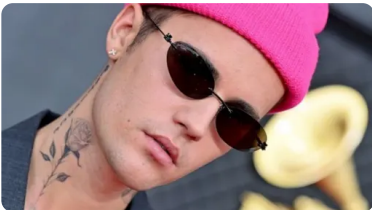


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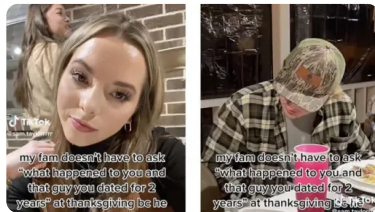
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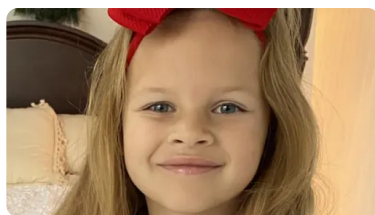
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and Friday; the ammunition has been detonating for almo...
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Washington Post



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