Abstract ESCAIDE 2021

LongCOVID Kids study: long-term effects of COVID-19 in children in the Netherlands

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Background 34

Long-term effects of COVID-19 in children remain unclear and pediatric studies are scarce. This study assesses characteristics and impact of persistent symptoms after acute COVID-19 (long COVID) in children aged 5-18 in the Netherlands.

Methods 55

In this ongoing cohort study, children with existing long COVID symptoms are retrospectively included from 24 June 2021 via self-registration on the LongCOVID study website. Characteristics and impact of long COVID symptoms are assessed by validated questionnaires, mainly focusing on fatigue, pain, shortness of breath, cognitive functioning and impact on daily life and school attendance.

Results 129

Until 13 September 2021, 69 children reporting long COVID symptoms (median age 14 (range 5-17; 62% female) were included, among which fatigue (74%), headache (55%), concentration difficulties (33%) and difficulties in busy places (33%) were most frequent, with a median duration of symptoms of 6 months at inclusion time (range 0.4-16). None were hospitalised during the acute phase of infection. The majority of children aged >10 (39/50;78%) indicate these symptoms have large impact on their lives, and 51% of all children are absent from school at times, or are not able to go to school at all (7%) because of their symptoms. In 4 weeks prior to inclusion, these children have missed on average 8 full school days (range 0-20) and missed classes on another 10 days (range 1-20).

Conclusions 58

Even after relatively mild acute infection, children report long COVID symptoms that have great impact to their daily life and school attendance. To improve our insight into prognosis and burden of disease related to COVID-19 in children, prospective cases with acute COVID-19 will be also assessed for development of long COVID symptoms, which is key for policy-making.

Keywords: long COVID, COVID-19, SARS-CoV-2, Children, Persistent symptoms

275 words (max 275)