

CHILD Cohort Study releases new COVID-19 Rapid Results data

HAMILTON, ON (June 21, 2021)

The CHILD Cohort Study (CHILD) has launched a new [CHILD COVID-19 Rapid Results](#) webpage to illustrate how the pandemic is affecting the physical and mental health of Canadian families.

The data report on COVID-19 infections among adults and children; changes in daily routines, schooling, work and healthcare utilization; as well as stress and coping during the pandemic. As the study proceeds, it will also address emerging topics like vaccine uptake and hesitancy.

“This information is helping us understand the direct and indirect impacts of the pandemic on families’ health and wellbeing,” says Dr. Meghan Azad, Canada Research Chair in Developmental Origins of Chronic Disease at the University of Manitoba, and lead of CHILD’s COVID-19 add-on study. “Ultimately, this will help public health officials and policymakers to better manage subsequent waves of transmission and minimize the unintended consequences of pandemic management policies.”

More than 1,400 households in four provinces, recruited from the CHILD cohort, are participating in the COVID-19 research. Data is self-reported from the study’s baseline questionnaire, collected between January 11 and June 13, 2021, and will be updated regularly with results from follow-up questionnaires, biweekly text message surveys and infection data based on blood antibody analysis. Data visualization graphs can be downloaded in PDF form and shared freely.

Key findings so far from *CHILD COVID-19 Rapid Results*:

- 1.5% of children and 2.1% of adults reported testing positive for SARS-CoV-2 infection at some point since the pandemic began.
- The vast majority of study participants (91%-99%) reported following standard pandemic control measures (e.g. wearing masks) after September 2020. A small minority (5%-8%) reported having to self-isolate or quarantine.
- 50% of parents were moderately to extremely worried about becoming infected themselves, and 70% were worried about their family members becoming infected.
- Almost half of working adults (45%) switched to working remotely; 28% reported a change in the number of hours they work, while nearly 25% reported that their jobs put them at increased risk of exposure to COVID-19.
- The most common change in daily routine for both children and adults was an increased screen time for non-educational purposes.
- Among adults (about 50%-60%), the most common methods of coping with pandemic-related stress were talking with friends and family, screen time activities, and exercise. Other reported coping methods included studying, eating or drinking alcohol (about 30% each), meditation (21%) and marijuana use (9%).
- 55%-70% of adults and children reported “more time with family” as a positive outcome of the pandemic.

CHILD is a national research study following nearly 3,500 Canadian children born in 2010-12 (and their families) from birth onwards to track the ways in which early-life environmental, physical, and social factors can shape health.

“When the pandemic hit, we were midway through the 8-year clinical visits and had to halt – and then modify -- visits and the collection of data and samples,” says Dr. Padmaja Subbarao, Director of CHILD and a co-Principal Investigator of the COVID-19 research.

“Quickly, we realized that the CHILD cohort offered a remarkable opportunity to study COVID-19, as we have years of pre-pandemic data and samples from our participating children and thousands of families across the country who are committed to helping others by participating in health research.”

Representatives from the Public Health Agency of Canada as well as public health units in each participating province are embedded in the research team as knowledge users. “The project is already moving quickly, and this rapid collection and sharing of data will contribute to pandemic response and recovery strategies across the country,” says Deborah McNeil, Scientific Director for the Maternal Newborn Child and Youth Strategic Clinical Network in Alberta Health Services. “Everyone acknowledges the urgent need to better understand the pandemic’s impact on Canadian families. We are truly fortunate in Canada to have CHILD as a platform for novel health research.”

CHILD COVID-19 Rapid Results data will be updated on the website regularly and the team is planning more in-depth analysis to understand why some families are more stressed or resilient, and why some people get symptoms of the virus while others don’t.

“Our biggest issue moving forward is funding for data collection,” adds Dr. Subbarao. “It’s crucial that we keep the CHILD cohort going so we can follow the long-term impacts of COVID-19 in these families and learn more about factors influencing health and development as the kids enter their teen years and beyond. It would be an incredible loss for Canada if this research cannot continue.”

CHILD’s COVID-19 research is funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), Research Manitoba and the COVID-19 Immunity Task Force (CITF).

Dr. Azad is Associate Professor and Canada Research Chair in Developmental Origins of Chronic Disease in the Rady Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Manitoba; a research scientist at the Children’s Hospital Research Institute of Manitoba (CHRIM); and Deputy Director of CHILD.

Dr. Subbarao is Professor and Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in Pediatric Asthma and Lung Health at the Hospital for Sick Children and University of Toronto, and cross-appointed at McMaster University; Director of the CHILD Cohort Study; and co-lead of the Precision Child Health initiative at the Hospital for Sick Children.

About the CHILD Cohort Study: Launched in 2008 by CIHR and AllerGen NCE, the [CHILD Cohort Study \(CHILD\)](#) is tracking nearly 3,500 Canadian infants and their families to help determine the root causes of chronic diseases such as asthma, allergies and obesity. CHILD spans four provinces, involving over 140 multidisciplinary researchers, students and research staff. [Watch the CHILD Cohort Study videos.](#)

About the Children’s Hospital Research Institute of Manitoba (CHRIM): The Children’s Hospital Research Institute of Manitoba was established in 2001. [CHRIM](#) is the research division of the Children’s Hospital Foundation of Manitoba. At the Institute, more than 270 world-class pediatric medical researchers, technical staff, students and support staff are involved in over \$20 million of research and clinical trial activity each year.

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