

Brief report on Covid-19 testing in children

Introduction and overview of The RCH National Child Health Poll

The Royal Children's Hospital (RCH) National Child Health Poll is a periodic national survey of Australian parents shedding new light on the big issues in contemporary child and adolescent health. The Poll's structure and focus combines the rigour of academic discovery with the timeliness and reach of online quantitative research, to deliver significant new knowledge about the health, wellbeing and lives of children and young people in contemporary Australia. See <https://www.rchpoll.org.au> for further information.

Two surveys have been conducted in 2020, both focusing on the pandemic and related impacts on Australian children and families.

Methods

In a cross-sectional survey fielded from Sept 15 to Sept 29, 2020 Australian parents were asked a series of questions related to their knowledge and attitude to testing for Covid-19. The findings were presented in a publicly available report and released on the 5th November 2020: see <https://www.rchpoll.org.au/polls/covid-19-testing-in-kids-what-concerns-parents/>

In addition to questions regarding knowledge and attitude to testings, parents were asked whether their child(ren) had experienced Covid-19 like symptoms over the 6 months preceding the survey and if they had been tested for Covid-19 during this period. Parents reported separately on each of their children aged less than 18 years. The questionnaire is presented at the end of this document.

This survey of a nationally representative sample of Australian parents and carers of children less than 18 years was conducted online for the Royal Children's Hospital National Child Health Poll by a private vendor, the Online Research Unit. The Online Research Unit (ORU) has a consumer panel of over 350,000 adults living in Australia aged 18 years and over with internet access. Participants are randomly recruited to the panel using both online and offline methods and only one person per household can complete the questionnaire. Parents were randomly selected by the ORU proportional to the population of states and territories in Australia. The data were subsequently weighted to reflect the distribution of the Australian parent population by state of residence, age, sex and socio-economic status using figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

The study protocol was approved by The Royal Children's Hospital Human Research Ethics Committee.

Results

A nationally representative sample of 1434 parents yielded data on 2550 children aged between one month and less than 18 years.

Table 1. Parent report of children with at least one episode of possible Covid-19 symptoms and Covid-19 testing over a six-month period by jurisdiction, RCH National Child Health Poll, September 2020

	Victoria (n=804)		New South Wales (n=807)		Other (n=939)		Australia (n=2550)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Possible Covid-19 symptom(s) at least once	153	19	237	29	315	37	705	28
Reported testing for Covid-19								
Every time	64	43 ¹	106	42 ¹	66	22 ¹	236	35 ¹
Some of the time	31	23 ¹	61	25 ¹	38	09 ¹	130	18 ¹
Never	58	33 ¹	70	33 ¹	211	69 ¹	339	47 ¹

Note 1: The proportion of children with at least one episode of possible Covid-19 symptoms who had a Covid-19 test

Table 2 Parent report of children with at least one episode of possible Covid-19 symptoms and Covid-19 testing over a six-month period by age and jurisdiction, RCH National Child Health Poll September 2020

	Victoria (n=804)		New South Wales (n=807)		Other (n=939)		Australia (n=2550)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Possible Covid-19 symptom(s) at least once	153	19	237	29	315	37	705	28
0 to < 5 years	50	31	69	39	68	50	187	39
5 to <13 years	74	19	126	26	186	40	386	28
13 to <18 years	29	8	42	24	61	21	132	18
Reported testing for Covid-19 every time	64	43	106	42	66	22	236	35
0 to < 5 years	18	41 ¹	26	38 ¹	9	5 ¹	53	29 ¹
5 to < 13 years	32	46 ¹	58	42 ¹	40	26 ¹	130	36 ¹
13 to < 18 years	14	40 ¹	22	50 ¹	17	36 ¹	53	43 ¹

Note: 1. The proportion of children with at least one episode of possible Covid-19 symptoms who had a Covid-19 test every time they had symptoms

RCH Child Health Poll Questionnaire: Questions used to collect data on history of Covid-19 like symptoms and testing

1. Thinking now about the SIX MONTHS since the pandemic began (SINCE MARCH 2020), has your child experienced ANY of the following symptoms? Please answer separately for each child {BY CHILD}

Fever, cough, shortness of breath, runny nose, sore throat, change in smell or taste?

Response items: Yes, no, not sure

{ If 'yes' to Q1 branch to Q2 if 'no' branch to Q4 (not shown)}

2. On how many **separate occasions** has your child developed one or more of these symptoms (***Fever, cough, shortness of breath, runny nose, sore throat, change in smell or taste***)?

- Once
- 2 times
- 3 times
- 4 times
- 5 times
- More than 5 times

3. Did your child have a COVID-19 test (a nasal and throat swab) when they had one or more of these symptoms (***Fever, cough, shortness of breath, runny nose, sore throat, change in smell or taste***)?

Select only one

- My child had a COVID-19 test ***every time*** they had one or more of these symptoms
- My child had a COVID-19 test ***some of the times*** they had one or more of these symptoms
- My child has never had a COVID-19 test