

Technical Note

This technical note follows the previous reports regarding the event of acute, severe hepatitis of unknown origin in children disseminated by the Pan American Health Organization / World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) on 23 April 2022 (two reports)¹, 25 April 2022², 29 April 2022³, and 10 May 2022⁴.

As of 15 May 2022, a total of 429 probable cases have been reported from 22 countries, including 26 cases who have required liver transplantation. In the Region of the Americas to date, a total of 33 probable cases in 6 countries have been reported to PAHO/WHO.

Although several research studies are ongoing, the epidemiological, laboratory, and clinical information currently available to WHO regarding this event remains limited. To date, no etiological agent has been identified. Several hypotheses are being investigated, including those that indicate adenovirus (primarily type F41) as one of the agents involved, along with other concomitant causes. The role of SARS-CoV-2, either as a co-infection or as a previous infection, in patients who acquire adenovirus infection, is being investigated.

To support ongoing research, PAHO/WHO, together with the affected countries, is collecting standardized data and conducting various studies to determine the etiology. As the investigation continues, recommendations for prevention, treatment, and control will be issued and updated.

PAHO/WHO recommends Member States to focus efforts on investigating cases potentially meeting the current WHO working case definition¹ rather than implementing universal surveillance. To this end, PAHO/WHO proposes the use of a standardized data collection form⁵ to help guide investigation and report to PAHO/WHO. The form can be completed online and is available at: <https://files.pahobra.org/limesurvey/index.php/781192>.

¹ WHO. Multi-Country – Acute, severe hepatitis of unknown origin in children. Disease Outbreak News. 23 April 2022. Available at: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/disease-outbreak-news/item/2022-DON376>.

² WHO. Event Information Site for IHR National Focal Points (EIS). Multi-Country – Acute, severe hepatitis of unknown origin in children. 25 April 2022.

³ PAHO/WHO. Technical Note: Acute, severe hepatitis of unknown origin in children. 29 April 2022. Available at: <https://www.paho.org/en/documents/technical-note-acute-severe-hepatitis-unknown-origin-children-29-april-2022>.

⁴ PAHO/WHO. Technical Note: Acute, severe hepatitis of unknown origin in children. 10 May 2022. Available at: <https://www.paho.org/en/documents/acute-severe-hepatitis-unknown-origin-children-10-may-2022>.

⁵ Given the dynamic manner of the situation, the list of variables may be modified or adjusted as the investigation continues.