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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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May 12, 2020

Multi-System Inflammatory Syndrome, Possible Link to COVID-19 in Children

Recent reports of children experiencing a rare and potentially deadly illness, possibly tied to the COVID-19 pandemic, are raising concerns among patients and pediatricians. The unfamiliar illness is known as pediatric multi-system inflammatory syndrome, resembles Kawasaki disease and toxic shock syndrome. The illness seems to affect the heart, but lacks the typical COVID-19 symptoms of a cough and shortness of breath. So far, the syndrome has appeared in children under the age of 15.

Currently, at least 85 cases have been diagnosed in the United States, including 3 deaths, with two more deaths under investigation in New York. **Lucas County does not have any reported cases, but would like to raise awareness of this illness affecting children.**

According to the American Heart Association, children with this new, possibly COVID-19-related syndrome may have some or all the features of Kawasaki disease. These children have a persistent fever, inflammation and evidence of single or multi-organ dysfunction (shock, cardiac, respiratory, renal, gastrointestinal or neurological disorder) and may or may not test positive for COVID-19.

Since some children are becoming very ill extremely quickly, children with these symptoms should be evaluated quickly and receive prompt treatment. As of now, doctors can only treat the syndrome with "supportive care" like medications to raise blood pressure and return the heart rate to normal.

Symptoms of the syndrome include:

- A prolonged fever lasting more than five days
- Severe abdominal pain, diarrhea or vomiting
- Patchy blue or pale skin discoloration
- Trouble breathing or rapid breathing
- Lethargy
- Rapid heart rate

Most children with the syndrome have either tested positive for a current infection with the coronavirus, or for antibodies to the virus, which suggests they were infected earlier and recovered.

And, according to case reports, some of the kids with the inflammatory syndrome who tested negative on coronavirus tests had been exposed at some point to someone known to have COVID-19.

Eric J. Zgodzinski, DrPH, MPH, RS, CPH
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The inflammatory syndrome can appear days to weeks after COVID-19 illness, doctors say, suggesting the syndrome arises out of the immune system's response to the virus.

The Toledo-Lucas County Health Department continues to inform and heighten awareness of illnesses that could affect our community. If your child is experiencing any of the above symptoms, please seek medical attention or call your family physician.

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