

# Texas boy dies after COVID-19 infection turned into severe gangrene

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*This Sunday, October 24, the World Socialist Web Site will host an online event featuring a panel of scientists, to explain how COVID-19 can be eradicated and the pandemic finally brought to an end. Register today.*

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Ten-year-old Zyrin Foots from Huntsville, Texas died on October 13 after contracting COVID-19. He was one of the more than 5,000 US children since the beginning of the pandemic to develop Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children or MIS-C, a condition only found among children who are exposed to the deadly coronavirus.

The effects of MIS-C are horrific. The child's brain, kidneys, eyes and other organs swell up and malfunction. "Children with MIS-C may have fever and various symptoms, including abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea, neck pain, rash, bloodshot eyes, or feeling extra tired," writes the Texas Department of State Health Services.

For Zyrin, the inflammation was worst in his heart. As blood ceased to flow through his arms and legs, he developed a severe case of gangrene, rotting the flesh on all four of his limbs.

He was placed on life support on September 30, but continued to deteriorate. Photos on the family's GoFundMe page show that the gangrene in Zyrin's legs became extremely severe, with multiple gaping wounds that appear to be several inches across.

Zyrin's mother Amber faced an unfathomable decision: either have doctors amputate her son's arms and legs, winning Zyrin a 25 percent chance of survival as a quadruple amputee; or allow him to be taken off life support.

Amber had already lost one child. As her sister Ashley Engmann explained in a fund appeal, "Amber

was in an accident 8 years ago. She was hit by a truck when she was 6 months pregnant, lost her 3rd son, Zekiah, and nearly died. She was in a coma for 4 months and took a couple of years to recover. Zyrin is her eldest son. Her second son, Zaiden, is the only one left. I am reaching out because we have no way of paying for everything that is to come. My sister is permanently disabled and there isn't any life insurance."

Zyrin's family was not the only one to face such a tragic situation. Dae'shun Jamison from Michigan, another ten-year-old with MIS-C, also developed gangrene in all four limbs. He is recovering from a quadruple amputation performed in February of this year.

Nor will they be the last. The state of Michigan warned in a report on MIS-C earlier this month, "Expect cases to rise in future" because "higher community transmission is followed by higher incidence of MIS-C cases nationally."

Ashley Engmann wrote of Amber's painful experience on Facebook, "Watching her today in the hospital room, agonizing over a decision about her firstborn son was the most gut wrenching and unbelievable thing I've ever been a witness to. My heart is shattered into a million pieces for her and for the loss of another son... my heart breaks for all of us for the life of a child that had so much more of a life to live. The absolute horror of how this all occurred is mind baffling. I can't wrap my head around this."

Zyrin's family believes he caught the virus at Huntsville Intermediate School, where he was a student. The school is open for full in-person learning, with no virtual learning, and like almost all Texas schools it does not require students or teachers to wear masks or socially distance.

The virus is still spreading in Texas schools. Last week, there were 4,643 reported new cases of COVID-19 among students and 907 among staff at public schools in Texas. As schools fully reopened across the country, child hospitalizations hit at an all-time high in September, when there were more than 200,000 children infected with COVID-19 in the US for five consecutive weeks.

Huntsville is a town of 46,000 people, located about an hour's drive north of Houston in eastern Texas. It is a company town for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ)—the state prison system—which employs over 6,000 people—more than 13 percent of the city's population. That's more than double the size of the next largest employer, Sam Houston State University, which boasts the largest “criminal justice” academic program in the US.

The town is also the location of the most active execution chamber in the United States, the “Walls Unit,” where 573 men and women have been executed since 1982, when Texas reinstated the death penalty. One-thousand and seven-hundred people are currently imprisoned there, 197 are on death row and four are scheduled to be executed before the end of the year.

At least 13 TDCJ staff members died of COVID-19 last month, including a cook at the Walls Unit. The *Dallas Morning News* called September “the deadliest month for employees of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice since the pandemic began.”

Science has shown that a virus as contagious and deadly as the Delta variant, which is currently responsible for 99 percent of new COVID-19 infections and killing more than 1,600 people in the US every day, can only be eliminated and eventually eradicated by a comprehensive program of public health measures, which includes vaccines, masks, contact tracing and, crucially, the closure of schools and non-essential workplaces.



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