



Department of Pediatrics
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Myths about Covid-19 and children

As the new school year approaches, many school districts in Wisconsin are in the process of finalizing policies on everything from facility cleaning to distancing to mask wearing. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) are trusted sources for the best practices to keep kids safe, and these two organizations agree on back-to-school recommendations for the fall. The Department of Pediatrics stands in strong agreement with the CDC and AAP guidance. This agreement should reassure families. That said, we understand that misinformation about masking and back to school guidance is concerning to parents. Here, we address the top myths about Covid-19 and children.

Myth #1: Kids don't get seriously sick from Covid-19.

Fact: Children and adolescents can be infected with SARS-CoV-2, can get sick with Covid-19, and can spread the virus to others.

- While children do not die from the virus at the same rate as adults, they can still die from Covid-19, they can still get very sick, and some get sick enough to be hospitalized. In fact, children die from Covid-19 at rates similar to other diseases for which children are vaccinated or kept out of school.
- Children can transmit the virus to others, which is especially dangerous for families that include someone who is immunocompromised. In fact, some children are at higher risk of Covid-19 due to medical conditions.
- As of July 2021, more than 4,000 children with Covid-19 developed multisystem inflammatory syndrome and more than 340 children have died from Covid-19 in the United States. It is notable that this impact was documented when many mitigating measures were in place across the country and therefore, may not represent the potential full impact on children.
- In addition to deaths and severe illness, some children develop long-Covid symptoms and other complications due to infection with SARS-CoV-2. Researchers are just beginning to understand the longer-term impacts that even mild Covid infections may have on children.
- As of July 2021, more than 40,000 children in the United States have lost a parent to Covid-19, and it is estimated that more than 120,000 have lost a primary caregiver.

Myth #2: Masks don't work.

Fact: Studies have shown that universal masking has been an incredibly effective tool for controlling the spread of Covid-19 in schools.

- Universal masking can allow schools to largely operate normally.
 - Distancing can be reduced in the classroom or on the bus when everyone is masked.
 - If children are exposed to Covid-19 in a fully masked environment, they do not need to quarantine.
 - Most children can mask successfully; a few children with special needs may need accommodations if they are unable to consistently mask.
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Myth #3: Masks can be dangerous to kids (e.g., masks restrict air flow, increase CO₂ levels in the bloodstream, cause CO₂ poisoning).

Fact: Masks are made of breathable material that does not block oxygen or trap CO₂.

- Masks are designed to reduce respiratory droplets that may contain Covid-19, either from the wearer or to protect the wearer from others, but oxygen can flow through and around the mask.
 - CO₂ molecules are so small, they flow through masks like oxygen.
 - Proper masks are safe for kids.
 - Children under the age of two, those with special needs, cognitive impairments or severe breathing problems should not wear a mask for their safety, and caregivers should consult their pediatrician for guidance on Covid-19 prevention.
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Myth #4: Vaccines for teens were rushed and are not safe.

Fact: Vaccines are extremely effective and have been extensively tested to show that they are safe.

- As of July 2021, more than four billion people have received at least one dose of a Covid-19 vaccine and more than a billion people are fully vaccinated worldwide. Serious side effects are extremely rare.
- All vaccines that are approved for children and teens go through the same testing and review as those developed for adults.
- The FDA is continuously monitoring for unusual side effects even after vaccines are authorized. All reports are taken seriously and investigated thoroughly.
- Studies of Covid-19 vaccines in children <12 years of age are ongoing, but approval will not occur until there is sufficient data that proves they are safe and effective. It will take some time until vaccines are available for these younger age groups.



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