

PRESS RELEASE

With COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations once again at concerning levels across the state, physician members of the Nebraska Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Nebraska Academy of Family Physicians, and the Metro Omaha Medical Society feel compelled to address some of the misconceptions and misinformation that exists regarding COVID-19, masking and practices aimed at preventing the spread of the virus.

Understanding parents want to protect the health and welfare of their infants, children and adolescents and strive to make the best possible health decisions regarding COVID-19, we want to communicate important information and recommendations from leading health care experts.

As physicians who see firsthand the impact COVID-19 has on our patients, particularly children and adolescents, we urge parents, caregivers, schools, and our community and government leaders to recognize the proven public health measures aimed at preventing further unnecessary child COVID-19 cases and deaths. One more death is one too many.

The science is clear - masks are safe and effective at preventing the spread of COVID-19 in children, especially when they are in indoor group settings like school.

- The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has issued Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in Schools, a document with the exact same recommendations – **masks** and **vaccines** are our best tools. ¹
- A systematic review by the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of more than one hundred studies showed that **universal masking in public** reduces the infection rate of COVID-19 below 1, effectively stopping the spread of the disease.²
- A study of 340,000 people in Bangladesh, the largest mask study to date, provides conclusive evidence that masks limit the spread of COVID-19.³
- Local and nation-wide public health experts agree that masks are key to ending this pandemic.

The Numbers

- There have been NO documented cases of hospitalization due to mask related illness.
- However, as of Aug 26, 2021:
 - 4.8 million children have tested positive for COVID-19
 - children represented 22% of new COVID cases
 - 1900 children are currently hospitalized for COVID-19 in the US.
 - 16,500 children have been hospitalized, and 322 have died, making COVID-19 a leading cause of death among children.

Endorsements:

This statement is endorsed by the Nebraska Medical Association and the Lancaster County Medical Society.

Resources:

1-CDC COVID-19 guidance for schools & childcare centers - https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html#anchor_1625661984621

2-Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences – “An evidence review of face masks against COVID-19” - <https://www.pnas.org/content/118/4/e2014564118>

3-Pre-print large-scale study of mask efficacy - <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/09/01/masks-study-covid-bangladesh/>

Reuters Fact Check article “Fact Check-Masks do not expose children to dangerous levels of carbon dioxide” - <https://www.reuters.com/article/factcheck-masks-children/fact-check-masks-do-not-expose-children-to-dangerous-levels-of-carbon-dioxide-idUSL1N2P929B>

American Academy of Pediatrics Return-to-School guidance - <https://www.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>