



Children's Wisconsin, UW Health Kids and the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics call on the community to help keep kids safe and in school

Children's Wisconsin, UW Health Kids and the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics are making a plea to Wisconsin communities: Keep kids safe and keep schools open. How? Follow public health measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Children's hospitals across the country and here in Wisconsin are seeing an alarming increase of patients with COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses. In fact, over the last month, positive cases in kids have doubled.

Confirmed COVID-19 cases statewide	Total	Age 0-3	Age 4-8	Age 9-13	Age 14-17
Week of Sept. 12	5,248	465	1,239	1,829	1,715
Week of Sept. 5	4,336	479	1,106	1,410	1,341
Week of Aug. 29	3,085	402	793	960	930
Week of Aug. 22	2,338	377	630	691	640
Week of Aug. 15	2,098	346	556	628	568

We are very concerned about this trajectory and are asking the community to stay vigilant to keep our kids and communities safe. Please continue to practice safety precautions we know to be effective in limiting the spread of disease, including:

- Wear a mask. Everyone age 2 and above should wear a mask when in public and indoors. Masks work. We know this is true. Wearing a mask consistency over the nose and mouth while indoors is one of the easiest and most important thing we can do right now to ensure that our communities stay healthy and our kids stay in school.
- Get vaccinated. Anyone who is eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine should receive it as soon as possible. It is safe and effective, and the more people who get vaccinated the sooner the pandemic can end. Right now, kids under 12 cannot get vaccinated and not enough of our population is vaccinated to protect them and their parents, grandparents and friends. Review the [myths and facts and frequently asked questions resources](#), and please call your child's primary care provider if you still have questions.
- Watch your distance in public spaces.
- Wash your hands.
- Only go to school or work or participate in other activities when feeling well. Follow public health guidelines and your pediatrician's guidance in seeking COVID-19 testing when appropriate.
- Make a plan for testing. Find out where your local testing sites are before you need a test. Check with your school district as many of the schools around the state are offering free and convenient options for COVID-19 testing for their students and in some cases family members. Getting quick and timely access to COVID-19 testing for students, families and school staff is an important part of keeping schools open and our communities healthy. To find additional testing locations, visit the [Wisconsin Department of Health website](#).

- Get your flu shot. We are quickly moving into flu season and, more than ever, it is essential to receive the annual flu vaccine. Hospitals are already busy with respiratory viruses and other illnesses. Help us help kids by curbing the spread.

Kids are back in school and we strongly support efforts to ensure Wisconsin kids can be in school safely. In-person instruction, sports and other extracurricular activities are essential to kids' overall health and well-being, including their mental health. This is our plea. This is what we are fighting for. It is essential we protect our children from unnecessary exposure to COVID-19 and avoidable school closures due to workforce illnesses.

We know several schools in Wisconsin have already had to close due to a dramatic rise in COVID-19 and RSV cases. When they re-open, many will require masks. Let's learn from their experiences. Recent research found that of the school-associated COVID-19 outbreaks, 59.2 percent happened in schools with no mask requirement, while only 8.4 percent occurred in schools that required masks. Masks work. Our hope is it's apparent to all how important having kids wear masks is in achieving our goal of keeping kids in the classroom.

While most children who contract COVID-19 do not require hospitalization, some do. They are of course able to spread this illness to others, and there is still a lot we don't know about the long-term effects of COVID-19. Wisconsinites care for each other. We can get in front of this and help kids continue to safely participate in activities that stimulate thinking, promote physical activity and encourage socialization.

We all have a role to play in limiting the spread of COVID-19. Following public health protocols, especially wearing masks, can reduce the spread of illness and the need for quarantine and isolation from work, school and other activities. Simply put, we need to keep kids in schools, parents and caregivers at work and our health care staff on the frontlines caring for kids. Prevention, along with vaccination, remains the most effective strategy in overcoming this pandemic.

Here is the latest COVID-19 report from [Children's Wisconsin](#).