

Mississippi Chapter

INCORPORATED IN MISSISSIPPI

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



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Dear School Superintendents,

On July 22, 2021, MS-AAP issued a public statement advocating that all return-to-school policy considerations should start with the goal of keeping students safe and physically present in school. In addition, we also suggested that all students over two years and all school staff wear face masks when indoors (unless medical or developmental conditions prohibit use).

Many districts acted boldly to incorporate these and other considerations.

We understand it may not be easy to defend these plans. Therefore, we would like to provide you with additional support regarding the use of masks and the importance of vaccinations against COVID-19.

MASKS

When it comes to use of face masks, the bottom line is safety first. Along with physical distancing and good hand washing, [face masks](#) help prevent the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes [COVID-19](#). This includes the more contagious Delta variant. Masks can be especially important for children younger than age 12, who are not yet [eligible](#) for the COVID vaccines.

*Can wearing a mask make it harder for my child to breathe? **No***

*Can masks interfere with a child's lung development? **No***

*Do masks trap the carbon dioxide that we normally breathe out? **No***

*Can masks lead to a weaker immune system by putting the body under stress? **No***

You may find further facts here: [Mask Mythbusters: Common Questions about Kids and Facemasks](#)

Please share this information with your parents and staff.

Please remember that eating and drinking in close proximity can foster the spread of SARS-CoV-2. We also recommend cohorting children as this practice will aid in contact tracing when there is exposure in your schools.

VACCINATIONS

Vaccines are our best hope to end the pandemic. Three vaccines currently are available for adults, yet only one is available to children age 12 and older. In addition, it may soon be available for all school-aged children.

These new vaccines are remarkably effective and safe. We urge children and adults to get the vaccine as soon as possible. The vaccines are essential now with the rise in cases caused by the Delta variant, a more contagious strain, which spreads at alarming rates and infects more children.

Many pediatricians are ready to vaccinate children in their offices and through clinics at your schools via the MSDH Adopt-a-School-Vaccination project.

There is *much* more information on masks and vaccines available for those who wish for a more in-depth discussion. If you would like a pediatrician to speak with your school board, please call or email our office.