

UW Health: Pediatrician busts myths about kids and COVID-19

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MADISON, Wis. - Misinformation has been an issue since the beginning of the pandemic, so UW Health pediatricians are correcting some of the most common and harmful myths around kids and COVID-19 to ensure everyone - from teachers to parents to school administrators - can making informed decisions for school safety.

The data below comes from the Centers of Disease Control and American Academy of Pediatrics.

Myth #1: Kids don't get seriously sick from COVID-19. It is not worse than the flu.

FALSE. Kids can get and transmit COVID-19, including severe cases.

- Children can still get very sick and even be hospitalized. Some children are at higher risk of COVID-19 due to medical conditions.
- While children do not die from the virus at the same rate as adults, they can still die from COVID-19. In fact, children die from this virus at rates similar to other diseases for which children are vaccinated or kept out of school.
- Children can also transmit the virus to others, which is especially dangerous for families that include someone who is immunocompromised.
- As of July 2021, more than 4,000 children with COVID-19 developed multisystem inflammatory syndrome. More than 340 children have died from COVID-19 in the United States.
- Some children develop long-term symptoms and other complications due to infection. Researchers are just beginning to understand the impacts of even mild COVID-19 infections on children.

Myth #2: Masks don't work.

FALSE. 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.

Myth #3: Vaccines for teens were rushed and are not safe.

False. Vaccines are extremely effective and have been extensively tested to show they are safe.

- As of July 2021, more than two billion people have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine and more than a billion people are fully vaccinated worldwide.
- 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.

Myth #4 Masks can be dangerous to kids (e.g., masks restrict air flow, cause CO2 poisoning).

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

- Mask are designed to reduce respiratory droplets that may contain COVID-19, either from the wearer or to protect the wearer from others.
- Oxygen and CO2 molecules are so small, they can flow through and around the mask.
- 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.

A recorded interview with Dr. Gregory DeMuri, pediatric infectious diseases specialist, UW Health, and professor of pediatrics at University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health is available or we have limited availability for zooms.