

# Virginia Chapter

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



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Last week's CDC announcement relaxing mask requirements for vaccinated individuals was a welcome sign that we may soon return to some semblance of normalcy. And, as Governor Northam aligned Virginia's masking policy with the CDC's guidance, Virginians breathed a sigh of relief that we may soon enjoy many activities we have missed during the last 14 months.

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Before we declare the pandemic over and get ready to move on, it's important we not lose sight of a few details. Wearing a mask is not just about protecting ourselves but about protecting others. It will be just as important for unvaccinated people to continue to mask as before the mandate was lifted if we are to send COVID packing. As of May 17, the VDH COVID dashboard showed that less than 40% of Virginians are fully vaccinated.

Among the vulnerable unvaccinated Virginians are children under age 12 who do not yet qualify for the vaccine. Over 3 million US children have had COVID (14% of total US cases) with 308 child deaths from COVID according to the American Academy of Pediatrics "Children and COVID-19 State Data Report" (5/13/2021). Current data also shows an uptick in pediatric cases nationwide. Kids are at risk for Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C), a serious condition accompanying COVID-19 infection in some children. And, emerging data out of Europe suggests that children with COVID experience high rates of "long COVID" with long-lasting symptoms.

So, Virginia, let us do this for the kids! Remember, our kids are still masking in schools. If you are healthy and vaccinated, continue to mask in settings where required for everyone, such as planes, trains, and buses, healthcare settings, or in businesses where mandated. Even if fully vaccinated, you can always choose to wear a mask in situations where you feel more comfortable wearing one. If you are not yet vaccinated, continue to mask, and practice physical distancing as per CDC guidelines. And, if you are vaccine-eligible, consider getting the vaccine. If not for you, do it for the kids.

For more information on the CDC's new mask guidelines:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html>

For guidance on masking for families with unvaccinated children:

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/Does-my-unvaccinated-child-still-have-to-wear-a-mask.aspx>

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VA-AAP Board Member