

Virginia Chapter

American Academy of Pediatrics

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - August 9th, 2021

Virginia Pediatricians urge all schools to universally mask children indoors regardless of vaccine status.

The Virginia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (VA-AAP) strongly recommends that all school aged children in every school division in the Commonwealth be masked for school this Fall regardless of vaccine status. This is based on the observation that COVID-19 infection rates are rapidly increasing across the Commonwealth, the Delta variant is more contagious than previous strains of the virus and can be spread by even those that are vaccinated, and face masks have been scientifically proven to be effective, well-tolerated and safe. This position aligns with the National American Academy of Pediatrics' updates to their "[COVID-19 Guidance for Safe Schools](#)" and the "[Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools](#)" by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

VA-AAP continues to advocate that the highest priority is for schools to be opened and remain open. This is best accomplished through effective mitigation strategies that include vaccination of eligible children and the wearing of face masks by all children except those with a medical exemption determined by a physician. Continuing to use a simple, important layer of mitigation (masks) during a time of substantial community spread of disease will reduce illness and quarantine and keep more children healthy and in school, allowing families to continue to go to work as well. Every effort should be made to support vaccination, which has been enormously effective in minimizing disease, particularly hospitalizations and death, even against the Delta variant.

The Chapter implores schools and communities to use science and data to guide decisions, with the understanding that policies are intended to lessen but cannot eliminate risk. Local pediatricians and public health officials should be consulted as policies to control COVID-19 in schools are created and revised. As rates of COVID-19 disease decrease and vaccination rates rise, policies should be reassessed, and universal masking may be paused based on local conditions and with consultation of health officials.

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