

NJAAP Statement on Masks in Schools

On February 7, 2022, NJ Governor Phil Murphy announced that on March 7, 2022 the statewide mask mandate in schools would be lifted. Using the trend of declining infections across the state, along with increased vaccine availability, this may be a step to move forward from this pandemic.

Throughout the pandemic, the New Jersey Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (NJAAP) has followed the guidance of the American Academy of Pediatrics to protect children. The guidelines from the AAP are updated every 30 days to reflect trends in infection and the current status of the virus and variants. We will continue to refer to these guidelines, developed by experts, to help keep children safe.

The approach to COVID-19 mitigation has always been one of multiple layers. Masks are one layer of protection available to decrease the likelihood of infection. The next month will be important in the reduction of infected individuals to stay on track for the lifting of this mandate. Continuing masks at this time, along with continued vaccination of all eligible individuals, physical distancing, and keeping sick members of the family away from others will continue to decrease infection burden and allow for further loosening of restrictions.

Children have not been the primary vectors of disease spread with this virus, but they can spread to those around them. Though the large majority of infected children will have mild illness, some children will have more serious illness and can have lasting effects after the acute illness has passed.

The NJAAP supports the decision of individual school districts to maintain mask mandates while following the science and recognizing the variations in infections throughout the state. We support parents who choose to continue to mask their children and encourage school districts to be open and supportive of children who remain masked despite the lifting of the state restrictions. We encourage families to vaccinate all those eligible and continue to practice layered mitigation strategies.