

US daily hospital admissions for children reach all-time pandemic high

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“We have reached a grim juncture: more US children are hospitalized with COVID than at any other time point in the pandemic, and this number will continue to grow as the Delta variant spreads.”—Dr. Heather Haq, Baylor College of Medicine, August 9, 2021

The United States has reclaimed its position as the global epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic—a criminal “achievement” of the American ruling elite—due to the rapid transmission of the Delta variant, which now accounts for more than 93 percent of all sequenced cases.

Every reputable epidemiologist and public health official had warned that abandoning mitigation measures combined with ending mask mandates was a recipe for disaster. Now the disaster is here.

The country saw almost 700,000 new cases of COVID-19 last week, a 17 percent increase over the previous week. The death toll last week was 3,500 people, a 13 percent rise from the preceding week, and deaths are a lagging indicator. They will increase more rapidly. Every state in the US is reporting a rise in daily case rates. The current cumulative totals are 36.63 million COVID-19 infections and over 633,000 deaths.

According to the COVID tracker of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the current seven-day moving average (the daily rate averaged over a seven-day period) is 683 percent above the lows observed on June 19, 2021. In contrast, the number of COVID tests has barely climbed 15 percent. This means that American society is flying blind into a new pandemic storm.

The current seven-day average of positive tests is close to 10 percent. The seven-day average for new hospital admissions of patients with confirmed COVID-19 in the United States in the first week of August was 8,308, a 22 percent increase from the last week in July. In total, there are now 66,477 people admitted to US hospitals for complications from COVID.

Much of the current surge is taking place across Southern states—Florida, Louisiana, Arkansas and Missouri—that have had relatively low rates of COVID vaccinations

compounded by resistance to implementing any significant measures to contain the spread of the virus. However, former Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Commissioner Dr. Scott Gottlieb recently warned that Northern states may see a rapid rise in cases once children are back in school.

“The Northern states are more impervious to the kind of spread we saw in the South, but they’re not completely impervious. The challenge right now is that the infection is going to start to collide with the opening of school,” he explained on “Face the Nation” Sunday.

The director of the National Institutes of Health, Dr. Francis Collins, speaking on ABC News, noted, “And now we’re paying a terrible price as the cases go up quickly, most of the cases, of course, now in unvaccinated people.”

The US has just fully vaccinated half the population and about 90 million people have yet to get a single dose. Collins added, “Almost all of the deaths are unvaccinated people. And these are younger people now, including children. The largest number of children so far in the whole pandemic right now are in the hospital, 1,450 kids in the hospital from COVID-19.”

The American Academy of Pediatrics, which has been a consistent source of information on COVID and children, reported that since the onset of the pandemic nearly 4.3 million children have tested positive with the virus. Of the almost 700,000 COVID cases confirmed in the US in the first week of August, 94,000 were among children. The positivity rate on tests among children ranges between 4.8 and 17.6 percent, underscoring the fact that the number of pediatric cases is grossly underestimated.

The state of Mississippi is facing a dangerous collapse in its ability to render immediate intensive care to its population. State health officer Dr. Thomas Dobbs informed the press that there were no ICU beds available in about 20 of the state’s top-level hospitals. On Monday, more than 200 people were crowded into emergency rooms across many of the state’s hospitals waiting for admission.

Dobbs tweeted the following grim statistics from the Mississippi State Department of Health: “Today MSDH is

reporting 6,912 more cases of COVID-19 in Mississippi, 28 deaths, and 153 ongoing outbreaks in long-term care facilities.”

In Louisiana, COVID hospitalization records are being shattered almost daily. The number of COVID admissions has risen to the highest level since the beginning of the pandemic. Over the weekend, the state confirmed more than 12,200 new infections, bringing the seven-day count to an all-time high of 28,239. On Sunday, there were 2,720 patients hospitalized across the state.

In Florida, Darlene Andrews, a nurse at AdventHealth’s Orlando-area hospitals, noted that occupancy at six of seven hospitals had reached beyond full capacity with one at 123 percent for adults, she told the *Wall Street Journal*. The waiting time in the emergency rooms for beds is growing. Delays threaten unstable COVID cases or other urgent health conditions. The chief clinical officer Neil Finkler said point-blank, “This surge has come at us like a freight train.”

The two most populous states in the South, Texas and Florida, have the most reactionary, anti-science and, literally, anti-human, state officials.

The office of Florida Governor Ron DeSantis released a statement to the effect that the State Education Board could withhold salaries of superintendents who choose to implement mask mandates.

His office recently issued an executive order banning masks in schools, writing, “Education funding is intended to benefit students first and foremost, not systems. The Governor’s priorities are protecting parents’ rights and ensuring that every student has access to high-quality education that meets their unique needs.”

Such reactionary statements and maneuvers are motivated by political calculations and eschew any concerns for the public health safety of his constituents. And in this, the Republican governor has partners among the Democrats, despite their pretense of bitter hostility: The White House and the CDC are equally impervious to the requirements of science when they order children to go back to in-person instruction in schools, an effort that will insure mass infection and innumerable deaths.

In a similar vein, Governor Greg Abbott of Texas has thrown down the gauntlet staking out a firm position against any mask mandates while health officials are warning of reaching ICU capacity in the Austin area. The COVID-19 modeling consortium of the University of Texas projected that if the pandemic does not slow, it is almost certain that school openings will increase community transmission, fueling an already untenable situation.

When the mayor of San Antonio criticized Abbott’s ban on mask mandates as “risking the safety of our children,” the governor’s office issued a callous and chilling statement:

“Governor Abbott has been clear that we must rely on personal responsibility, not government mandates. Every Texan has a right to choose for themselves and their children whether they will wear masks, open their business, or get vaccinated.”

No one has the “right” to infect or kill other people under conditions of a deadly pandemic—not even the governor of Texas. This is a declaration, not of individual rights, but of government indifference to mass death.

And for all of the posturing about the “right to choose,” the children of Texas and throughout the country are being sent back into schools without any rights at all, including the right to be free of a disease that threatens death, or, in the form of Long COVID, a long-term and perhaps permanent physical and intellectual disability.

As the tweet by Dr. Heather Haq, assistant professor in the Department of Pediatrics at Baylor College of Medicine, noted, with 259 children hospitalized on August 7, the US surpassed a grim milestone for more children hospitalized in one day for COVID than any other time during the pandemic.

The rising number of pediatric hospitalizations is sparking concerns among health officials that when schools reopen, children will become the focal point of the burgeoning health crisis. The question is no longer if they get infected, but rather how sick can they get? Dr. Richard Malley, a pediatric infectious disease specialist at Boston Children’s Hospital, told the *New York Times*, “Everybody is a little bit nervous about the possibility that the Delta variant could in fact be, in some way, more dangerous in kids.”

To put it bluntly, this is not the time to experiment with the lives of children and certainly not to facilitate reopening of schools so that parents can go back to work producing profits and adding to the already bloated wealth of the capitalist elite. As one forthright epidemiologist warned, the next stage in the coronavirus tragedy, affecting millions of children, would be “the pandemic of the innocent.”



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