

# 1 million children infected with COVID in the United States last week

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One measure of the social crisis that besieges a country is to see how the most vulnerable in society are protected by those empowered to look after their welfare. The pandemic continues to thoroughly expose those placed into leadership positions, both Democrats and Republicans. The Biden White House stands on a par with Donald Trump and his barbaric and reactionary minions in utter contempt for and neglect of the American people.

In its weekly report on the state of COVID-19 infections among children in the United States, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) found that for the week ending January 20, 2022, more than 1.15 million new COVID-19 infections were reported. Infections among children also accounted for 25.5 percent of all those in the country. The Biden administration, however, continues to demand that schools remain open for in-person instruction.

The figure is a pandemic high, 17 percent more than even the 981,000 cases from the previous week, five times the rate of infections from last winter's peak. Of the 10.6 million total pediatric infections during the pandemic, more than 2 million occurred in just the last two weeks. Half of all these cases, some 5 million child infections, took place in the last five months.

Such a level of mass infection can only happen as a matter of deliberate policy. The US ruling elite is forcing working people to "live with the virus," which means sacrificing their children to a potentially deadly infection in order to fulfill the demands of the capitalists to produce surplus value. It is the only possible explanation for the systematic infection of so many children, who remain by far the least likely to have been vaccinated, by forcing them into schools, based on repeated lies that children are safer there and the virus does them very little harm.

Pediatric hospitalizations are at a pandemic high, impacting the youngest children at the highest rates. According to the AAP, 2,000 children were admitted last week and almost 7,000 since the Christmas holidays, accounting for 20 percent of all pediatric admissions since the pandemic began in early 2020.

Along with the rise in COVID-19 cases and hospitalization, deaths have also followed suit. Last week, 27 children died, about four every day. This is the second-highest weekly death toll, trailing only the week ending December 30, 2021, when 34 children died. Notably, almost half of all pediatric COVID-19 deaths have occurred since the beginning of September when children were ushered back into schools en masse.

Justifying the fear and consternation parents and caregivers face when their children take ill from a virus that could be eliminated, the consensus of epidemiologists is that around one in 10 children's COVID-19 infections turns into Long COVID.

Symptoms of Long COVID include flare-up of severe fatigue, debilitating headaches and inability to concentrate or retain information, or a variety of conditions that can affect the heart, lung, kidneys, brain and skin, such as "COVID toes." This is a painful blistering rash that occurs on the feet and toes.

Dr. Peter Rowe, a Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine professor of pediatrics, said, "No one is certain exactly how many people who've had COVID-19 end up being long haulers. One study showed that as many as 52 percent of teens and young adults between ages 16 and 30 may experience lingering symptoms six months after COVID. The UK Office for National Statistics estimated 12.9 percent of children two to 11 years of age, and 14.5 percent of children 12 to 16 years old, still experienced symptoms

five weeks after infection.”

Reports are also emerging that COVID-19 cases among nursing home residents and staff are rising sharply. According to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, there were over 40,000 last week, a ten-fold rise since November. Additionally, nearly 1,000 residents and staff died.

The previous pandemic peak occurred last winter with 33,534 COVID-19 infections for the week ending December 20, 2020. At that time almost 6,000 nursing home residents died across the country. The lower death toll being reported now has much to do with high rates of vaccination among this group. But it also underscores the fact that vaccines do not absolutely protect against infections and death. And given the changes in how deaths are being diagnosed, it must be assumed that the latest figures are also undercounts.

Many of these infections are the result of infected nursing home staff transmitting the virus to the residents. In the first week of January, the CDC reported that more than 67,000 staff had been infected despite nearly 84 percent being fully vaccinated.

Compounding the rise in COVID-19 infections are staffing shortages. Speaking with NPR, Laurie Facciarossa Brewer, the long-term care ombudsman in New Jersey, said, “We are certainly seeing a huge increase in the number of calls from residents who are saying that they are not being changed, they’re not receiving their meals on time.”

Though staffing limits in New Jersey mandate one certified nursing assistant to eight residents on the day shift, under the current predicament the number of residents these overworked and underpaid assistants are caring for is in the double digits. Outrage and stress are leaving workers in a state of despair. Many are leaving due to chronic burnout. In turn, these facilities are being forced to shut down under the pressure, leaving hospitals in the lurch as they scramble to find a place to transfer their patients to care and rehabilitation centers.

David Grabowski, a professor of health care policy at Harvard Medical School, explained, “Things are condition critical today. Individuals can’t find an empty or staffed bed out there. It really puts hospitals in a difficult position. That’s a huge problem because they’re occupying a bed that would otherwise go to a new patient.”

The current daily average of COVID-19 fatalities has

reached 2,150 and continues to climb. Some 40,000 more people have perished since the New Year celebrations were held. The official cumulative death is expected to surpass 1 million before winter ends.

None of these grim figures, including the deaths of children and grandparents, are being mentioned by the major press. The jubilant mood is being driven by the natural course of the wave as overall COVID cases and hospitalizations are turning downward, at least in some parts of the country. They hope that once the scale of infections retreats, states and federal health departments can finally dispense with troubling statistics and ceremoniously declare the pandemic over despite ample warnings against such cavalier attitudes.

The working class must absorb these lessons that have come at a tremendous price to them. COVID-19 can be eliminated. But standing in the way is not the coronavirus but the outmoded capitalist mode of production that destroys everything it touches.



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