

COVID-19 deaths continue to rise among children in the US

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Despite the efforts by the ruling elite and the corporate media to falsely claim that SARS-CoV-2 has become endemic and will be more like the seasonal flu, COVID-19 infections and deaths continue at rates comparable to the peaks of previous waves.

A recent investigative report by Gothamist comparing provisional COVID-19 data by sex and age and preliminary influenza-associated pediatric deaths data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) explodes the lie that the disease is mild and is akin to the flu.

First, the report notes that influenza-related pediatric deaths nearly disappeared among children in 2021. This was largely due to the broad-based use of mitigation measures across the US and in schools. Second, COVID-19 deaths among children not only far outpaced flu-related deaths but have risen sharply throughout the pandemic.

Just three flu-related child deaths were reported in 2021 compared to 539 COVID-19 reported deaths among children in the same period. Additionally, as flu-related deaths diminished between 2020 and 2021 almost to zero, reported COVID-19-related deaths among children nearly tripled from 198 reported deaths to 539. The report also showcases that the greatest number of deaths in 2021 occurred during the last five months of the year, amid a surge of the Delta variant and after schools reopened for the fall semester.

Since the spread of Omicron, the frequency of deaths among children has only continued to rise. According to the same report, at least 58 reported deaths have been recorded since the start of 2022 alone.

It must also be noted that the CDC dataset used in the Gothamist report is a vast undercount of actual COVID-19 related deaths among children due to lack of systematic reporting and testing across the US.

Further, the CDC dataset used in the report, which organizes the sex and age of reported COVID-19 deaths by month, year and location of death, is itself an incomplete tally of the total number of preliminary reported child COVID-related deaths by the CDC.

The CDC reveals on its website that the above cited data are “provisional” and do not represent all deaths that were reported from 2020 to present. A footnote in the data states, “Data during this period are incomplete because of the lag in time between when the death occurred and when the death certificate is completed, submitted to NCHS and processed for reporting purposes. This delay can range from 1 week to 8 weeks or more.”

Another dataset on the CDC website, “Deaths by age group,” which is a preliminary report of the total number of reported deaths by age, shows a major discrepancy between the two datasets. While the provisional dataset used in the Gothamist report shows that 822 children have died from COVID-19 during the pandemic, the demographic dataset shows that 1,334 children have died from COVID-19.

This means that at least 512 reported child COVID-19 deaths have yet to be coded with date and location information and input into the provisional dataset. This discrepancy further counters the lie that COVID-19 is “mild” and does not significantly impact children. In reality COVID-19 is much more contagious and deadly than the flu, including in children.

Notably, in the past month since January 14, preliminary data from the CDC show that 293 new COVID-19 deaths among children have been reported.

While there is an overall lack of reporting in the mainstream media covering recent child deaths from COVID-19, one report in the local Missouri press

points to the devastating impact it can have on infants. On February 1, Amelia Peyton of Iberia, Missouri, died from COVID-19 at just nine months old. Her twin sister also tested positive for the virus and recovered.

Children under 5 remain the most vulnerable to infection as they have yet to be eligible for the vaccine and vaccination rates remain low among children 5 through 11 with only 24.3 percent of children in this age group fully inoculated.

The level of COVID-19 infection among children has also reached record levels in recent weeks. The latest American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) report shows more than 4.7 million children have been infected with COVID-19 since the beginning of the spring semester in early January. Contrary to the lies that schools are safe, the reality is that they are known centers for disease transmission.

It is under these circumstances that mitigation measures are being lifted in schools across the US by both Democratic- and Republican-led states alike. This is coupled with the ongoing efforts by the ruling elite to cover up the devastating impacts of the pandemic on the population and impose mass infection policies.

The Biden administration has claimed that schools are the safest places for children during the pandemic and has endorsed anti-scientific guidelines promoted by the CDC in order to force children into unsafe classrooms. This includes recent changes around testing, recommendations to end individual contact tracing and the lowering of isolation and quarantine time for students and staff including allowing exposed children to quarantine at school as long as they are asymptomatic. Further, the CDC continues to refuse to promote the understanding of the airborne character for the virus and the need for adequate ventilation in indoor spaces.

The latest effort for removing all trace of pandemic mitigations in schools has been over indoor universal masking. Presently there are eight Republican-led states with bans on mask mandates and fifteen Democratic-led states with mask mandates presently still in place in schools. However, exposing the bipartisan effort to promote the lie that COVID-19 is endemic and the population must learn to live with the virus, thirteen out of the fifteen states with mask mandates for schools have announced plans to lift their mandates in the coming weeks.

Massachusetts and Connecticut will end school mask mandates by the end of this month. Governors in New Jersey, Rhode Island, Delaware and Oregon have announced plans to lift mask mandates in schools in March. Louisiana has left the choice to individual districts and Maryland is allowing schools to lift their mask mandates if more than 80 percent of the student population is vaccinated. Governors in California, New Mexico and New York have announced plans to reassess school mask mandates in the coming weeks.

The further lifting of mitigation measures in schools will facilitate more infection, death and long-term illness among students, staff and their families. The comparative data between influenza deaths and COVID-19 deaths among children over the past two years shows the refusal of capitalist governments to implement necessary public health measures to save lives. Not only can the spread of COVID-19 be halted but so can that of other diseases like the flu. A fight by the global working class must be waged in its own interests for a globally coordinated strategy to eliminate COVID-19 and end the pandemic.



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