

## Our Goal

In the face of COVID-19, it is our goal as a community to protect the health and safety of our children and their teachers. **We want our schools to stay open and continue to be a safe place for our children.** In-school education is the most effective method of learning for most students and in-person contact is so important for the development of social skills and overall mental wellness of children (2).

This resource provides science-backed, evidence-based information that shows that masking ourselves and our children is one of our best tools for reaching these goals safely.

## What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is an infectious and highly-contagious respiratory illness that emerged in late 2019. The illness has a wide range of symptoms, including fever, loss of taste or smell, breathing problems, stomach issues, and muscle fatigue.

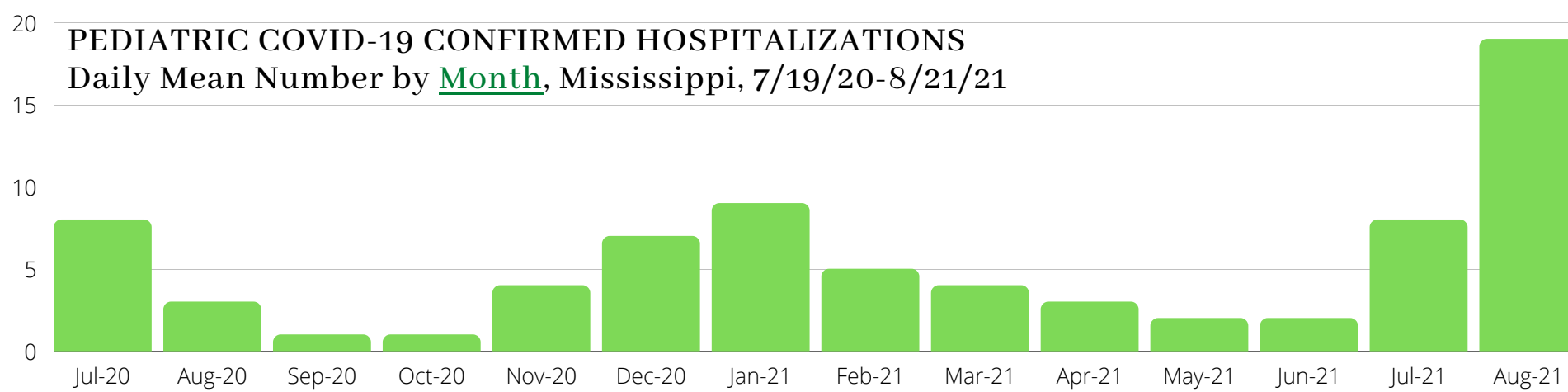
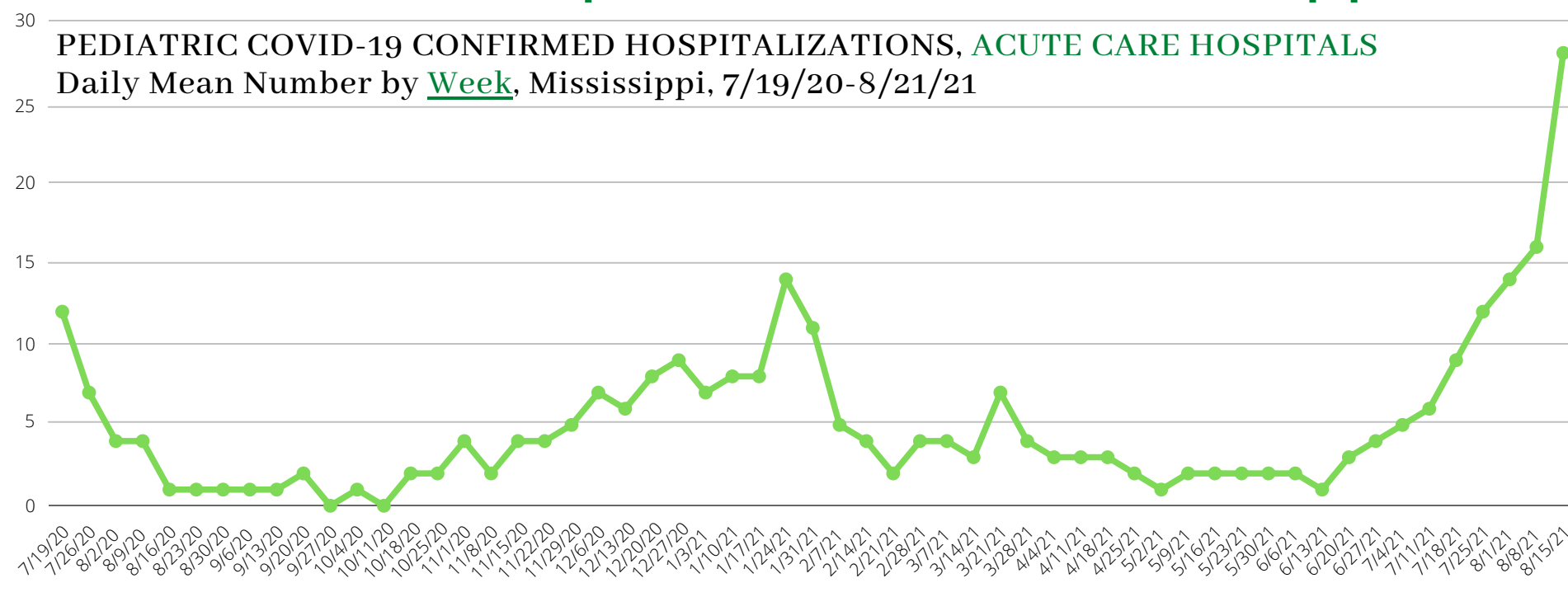
COVID-19 can have lasting impacts on the lungs, heart, and other organs. It has also been associated with a serious condition called Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C), making it even more important that we prevent COVID-19 in our younger population (5).

## How is COVID-19 spread?

Medical professionals report that COVID-19 is spread through "respiratory droplets exhaled when infected people breathe, talk, cough, sneeze, or sing" (3). These droplets remain suspended in the air and linger on surfaces for extended periods, making it likely that many people may come into contact with the droplets.

Transmission of the virus is higher when there is poor ventilation, close contact between infected and non-infected persons, and/or large groups of people in confined areas.

## Pediatric Hospitalizations in Mississippi



Charts Reproduced using Information from the Mississippi Department of Health, 2021.

## Our Youngest Children

We are seeing an increase in case counts among children 0-5 years old, a population largely unaffected by COVID-19 previous to the 2021 surge (8).

As of August 24, 93 Mississippi children between 0-4 years old had been hospitalized for COVID-19 (8).

## Our School-Aged Children

As of August 24, 117 Mississippi children between 5-17 years old had been hospitalized for COVID-19 (8).

The 5-17 year old age group is experiencing rapid increases in positive tests (8).

A total of 5,319 Mississippi students and 1,244 teachers tested positive for COVID-19 in the first two weeks of school year 2021-2022 (9)\*

More than 20,000 Mississippi students and 1,463 teachers were quarantined within the first two weeks of school year 2021-2022 due to close contact with COVID-19 (9)\*

\*Note that not all schools are currently reporting as some have not yet started classes.

## How effective is masking?

More than 55 scientific studies have concluded that cloth masks are extremely effective at reducing community transmission of COVID-19 (4).

These studies note that masking filters out any germs *leaving* the nose & mouth as well as germs *entering* the nose & mouth with up to 80% effectiveness (4).

## How safe is masking?

Researchers have found that:

- Face masks are safe for all children over the age of 2 (6).
- Masks do not impede children's ability to breathe, even when playing or running (6, 7).
- Adults wearing masks does not impact young children's speech & language skills (6).

## References

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- (3) Brooks, J. T and Butler, J. C (2021). "Effectiveness of Mask Wearing to Control Community Spread of SARS-CoV-2." Available at: <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2776536>
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- (8) Mississippi Department of Health (2021). "Percent of Total COVID-19 Cases by Age Group and Date, Mississippi." Available at: [https://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/\\_static/14,0,420.html#caseTable](https://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/_static/14,0,420.html#caseTable)
- (9) Mississippi Department of Health (2021). "Mississippi COVID-19 Report for K-12 Schools by County as of August 13, 2021." Available at: [https://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/\\_static/14,0,420,972.html](https://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/_static/14,0,420,972.html)