

The State of Our Children: Kids and COVID-19



August 5, 2021

In recent weeks, as the pandemic surges in parts of our community and across the country, there has been renewed concern over COVID-19 and our kids, the Delta variant, masks and vaccinations. Valley Children's addressed these issues as part of media activities in recent days. This briefing summarizes those comments and provides updated data on the virus.

Variants, Vaccines and Masks

Todd Suntrapak, President and CEO, Valley Children's Healthcare

Variants of COVID-19

COVID-19, like most viruses, has mutated over time, leading to new variants. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), they describe the current Delta variant as more transmissible than the initial variants of COVID-19 and more transmissible than the common cold, particularly in regions of the country with low vaccination rates, and it may cause more severe disease than other known versions of the virus.¹ The Delta variant was first detected in the Central Valley earlier this spring and according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), it is now responsible for more than 80% of infections in the U.S. and almost 60% in California.²

Vaccines for our workforce

From the start of COVID-19, Valley Children's has operated with the highest safety standards - driven by the best science - to ensure that our kids, families and teams were safe. That commitment to safety has been behind every single decision we have made as an organization since the start of this pandemic. We have led the way in visitor policies, employee PPE supplies, screening, testing and vaccines.

However, our work is clearly not done. As healthcare leaders, we are seeing the cases of COVID-19 rise again and we have more to do to slow and stop the spread in our communities.

When families walk through our doors, we want them to be assured that we have done everything we can to keep their kids safe. A fully vaccinated workforce is another way for us to demonstrate that. Effective September 21, 2021, Valley Children's will require all staff (in all of our facilities and those working remotely), physicians, vendors, students, volunteers and those conducting business in our facilities, to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

Vaccines for our kids

Valley Children's supports the July 30, 2021, statement by the AAP Committee on Infectious Disease regarding vaccines for children and adolescents. Their recommendations are as follows:

- COVID-19 vaccination is recommended for all children and adolescents 12 years of age and older who do not have contraindications using a COVID-19 vaccine.
- Any COVID-19 vaccine authorized through Emergency Use Authorization by the FDA, recommended by the CDC and appropriate by age and health status, can be used for COVID-19 vaccination in children and adolescents.
- The AAP urges parents to ensure that their children are up to date with routine childhood vaccinations, including the COVID-19 vaccine for those who are eligible. Check with your pediatrician on the recommended immunization schedule for your child.³

Masks

As the threat of transmission continues to grow and we return to in-person activities, including going back to school, we have an obligation to remain vigilant in our efforts to slow and stop the spread of COVID-19. As children under the age of 12 are not yet eligible to receive the vaccine, we all must take the recommended safety measures to protect them and keep them as safe as we can.

Valley Children's Healthcare continues to follow the guidance of the CDC and AAP that recognizes the importance of kids going back to school, and that they do so with added layers of protection. In addition to being vaccinated yourself, encouraging the adults who will be around your kids to get vaccinated and vaccinating kids 12 years and older, it is important to also wear a mask, wash hands, maintain social distancing and sanitize surfaces, classrooms, playgrounds, school buses and other frequently used locations.

We must do all we can to protect our kids. They are counting on us.

Sources:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. SARS-CoV-2 B.1.617.2 (Delta) Variant COVID-19 Outbreak Associated with a Gymnastics Facility – Oklahoma, April–May 2021. (July 28, 2021). <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7028e2.htm>
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. COVID Data Tracker: Variant Proportions. (July 28, 2021). <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#variant-proportions>
3. Committee on Infectious Diseases. COVID-19 Vaccines in Children and Adolescents. Pediatrics. 2021. COVID-19 Vaccines and Children. (August 2, 2021). <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/early/2021/05/11/peds.2021-052336.full.pdf>

Current Data and Trends Across Valley Children's Healthcare Network (as of August 1, 2021)*

*In previous editions of The State of Our Children, we had reported COVID-19 cases, positivity rates and hospitalizations over a longer period of time. Given the current resurgence of the virus, these numbers reflect activity for only the last three months to illustrate the increasing COVID-19 activity we are experiencing at Valley Children's Healthcare.

	Tests Administered	Positive Tests	Hospitalizations	ED Visits
July 1 - July 31	3,440	133	30	81
June 1 - June 30	3,006	37	15	13
May 1 - May 31	4,011	61	27	20

We are seeing increased COVID-19 cases in our inpatient, ambulatory and emergency departments, with the positivity rate significantly rising from June to July alone – 1.2% to 3.9%.