

# Should your child keep wearing a mask at school?

February 11 2022, by Laura Hegwer

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As schools across the state have eased their masking requirements for

kids after a recent court decision, you may be wondering what the best approach is for you and your child. And now that the masking mandate in Illinois will be lifted in many indoor places by the end of the month, the choice to mask or not to mask in public places outside of school may be largely up to each family.

We asked Nicole Keller, DO, a board-certified pediatrician and chair of pediatrics at Rush Copley Medical Center, to offer some guidance for parents in the uncertain weeks ahead.

## **If my school district is making masks optional, should my kid still wear a mask?**

Yes. Masking offers an effective layer of protection against COVID-19. Since COVID-19 is still actively infecting and spreading in our communities at [high rates](#) after our recent surge, continued masking is important.

The most effective way to stay healthy comes from layering our protection measures by masking, getting vaccinated, distancing and staying home when we are sick. No single protection measure is 100 percent effective, so this layered approach offers the best protection. And by now, masking is simple, safe and something we're all used to.

## **How do I encourage my kid to wear a mask if other kids aren't wearing them?**

You can talk to your child about how masking is something we do to protect others, protect our own family and protect ourselves. I realize we are all tired of masking and want to get back to normal, but by continuing to mask we help keep vulnerable populations safe at a time when COVID-19 is still actively spreading and causing lots of disease. If

we as parents model this behavior, our kids won't mind doing it either.

It's also still important to think about protecting kids under five years old who have not yet had an opportunity to get vaccinated as well as the higher-risk elderly and immunocompromised members of our communities. I hope schools and [public spaces](#) (especially indoor and crowded places) consider the health of these remaining susceptible children and adults and wisely opt for a gradual removal of mitigation measures, such as masking, based on a decreasing volume of COVID-19 cases and an increasing proportion of the population protected by vaccination.

Waiting to unmask until we've reached these goals—both a low volume of disease in the community and higher vaccination rates—will allow us to keep the greatest number of people healthy and safe as we ride out the time it takes to get there.

## **How do masks help keep schools open and safe?**

By masking, we keep the spread of COVID-19 and other germs minimal. Keeping cases of COVID-19 low allows students and teachers (and their families at home) to remain healthy so everyone can be in school and ready to participate. If illness spreads or surges, more people will have to stay home for extended periods of time, which makes teaching, learning and keeping schools open and functioning very challenging.

It is good to remember, too, that there are teachers and children who may have medical conditions that put them at high risk for COVID-19 but still deserve to be able to attend school. Our school staff and students may also live with high-risk people as well.

By continuing to mask while in [school](#), we are doing our best to keep all

these individuals healthy and keep schools open and safe for in-person learning.

Provided by Rush University Medical Center

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