

# Pavilion Pediatrics Fall Newsletter

Fall 2021



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## ~~Hello Summer: Hope on the Horizon~~

## Hello Fall: Fingers Crossed, Let's Get This Right

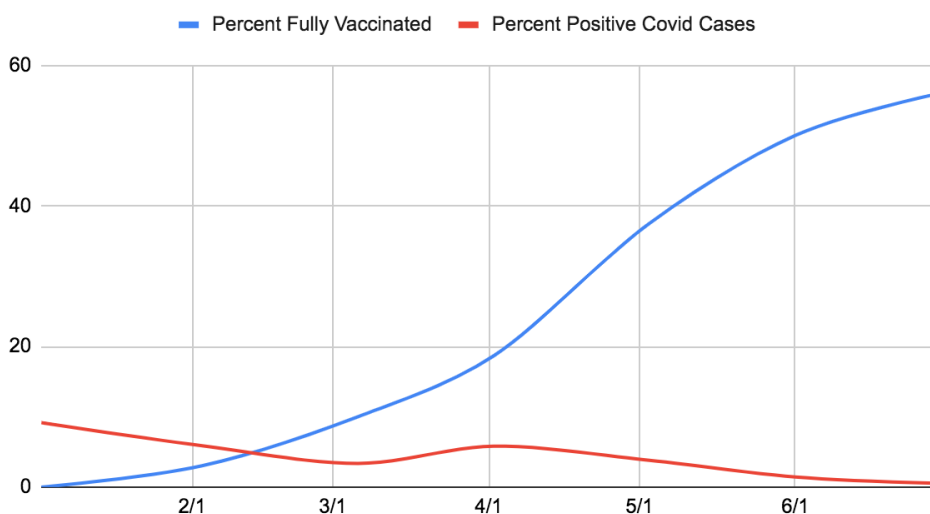
Pavilion Families, we had a draft of this newsletter all set to go in early June. You can see our earlier headline. Well, we quickly had to scrap that copy. Delta, delta, delta. I think if this pandemic has taught us nothing else, it has taught us, well...humility, and the ability to adapt to rapidly shifting circumstances and loads of in-real-time data. We are all no doubt sick of Covid, talking about it, thinking about it, trying to keep our kids safe from it, all the while making sure their mental and academic health is intact. I would venture that we are all - to use an overused but apt word - experiencing "unprecedented" exhaustion. It's no fault of ours, no lack of pluckiness on our part (trust us, that's been called to service); it's the normal reaction to nearly 20 months of pandemic living. So let's accept that. Give ourselves, our kids, their teachers, administrators, SCHOOL NURSES, the people we encounter in the grocery store, on the roads, on the phones, at our restaurants, at our healthcare establishments, grace. Our dictum at the outset "We're all in this together" sounds hokey and - to use our kids' parlance - cringey now, but in some ways we need that sentiment more now than we ever did. Help your kids wear their masks at school and daycare, model respectful behavior by masking when it would benefit others (it's the new handshake, don't you know), and get yourselves and your kids vaccinated when it is safe to do so.

The good news is that it looks as though Covid vaccines will likely become available for 5-11 year olds in the very near future. We have been giving the Pfizer vaccine to kids ages 12 and up at our office, and

assuming we continue to receive the vaccine, we should be able to provide the vaccines to the younger kids as well, once we receive the greenlight and know and can implement all the appropriate guidelines.

With regard to vaccination, things here in Maryland are looking quite good, with, at the time of this writing, just over 80% of the eligible population receiving at least one dose of a Covid vaccine. The effectiveness of these vaccines is illustrated in the following graph where you can see that as the percent of the population vaccinated goes up, our percent of positive Covid cases goes down. This is truly a triumph of medical science, developing safe and effective vaccines within less than a year of the pandemic.

Percent Positive vs Percent Vaccinated in Maryland



Many families have reasonably had questions about the safety of vaccines for children. As you are likely aware, both the Pfizer and Moderna 2-part vaccines have been found to be safe and effective in children. (Currently, only Pfizer is commercially available for patients younger than 16.) Vaccine manufacturers have followed the same three-phased safety review process with pediatric patients as they followed for adults. In fact, the data is even more promising in terms of efficacy for children. There have been some, albeit very rare, case reports of myocarditis and pericarditis (inflammation of the heart) in adolescents following the second dose of the Pfizer vaccine. There has been a great deal of scrutiny of this data, and both the CDC and American Academy of Pediatrics have stated that the risk of developing either myocarditis or pericarditis after vaccine is much less than the risk of developing these same conditions, as well as other harmful effects of Covid infection itself. In summary, the risk from vaccine is miniscule compared to the risk of Covid infection. Therefore, we advise all of our patients ages 12 and up to receive the vaccine.

What about variants? As you have read or heard, the Delta variant is now the most contagious and rapidly spreading variant. However, the bulk of new hospitalizations with the Delta variant are in unvaccinated individuals. Of course, for our children under 12 who do not yet qualify for the vaccine, this continues to pose a threat. The best way to limit this threat is for those of us who can get the vaccine to get it. The risk of contracting the virus is directly proportional to the prevalence of cases in the community.

## Mental Health: A Growing Epidemic within the Pandemic

Our children have demonstrated incredible resilience this past year, be it attending school virtually, or in masks, forgoing or limiting sports, performances, and social gatherings. Talk about grit for developing grit. The downside, however, is that many children have suffered emotionally, stripped of the buoying effects of these activities, children and adolescents are experiencing higher rates of depression and suicide. We at Pavilion encourage you to have frank, open conversations with your children about mental health and emotions. Many children, and adults, suffer alone, fearful of the stigma of mental illness. It may be helpful, depending on the developmental level of your child, to share with your child your own experiences of managing difficult emotions. Our children tend to put us on pedestals, assuming that we don't struggle ourselves. Sharing with them our stories of and strategies for overcoming difficult times can be incredibly helpful and allow them to see a path out of difficult feelings. At the very least, your modeling for them empathetic, compassionate vulnerability paves a way for them to do this for themselves. As always, if you have any concerns at all about your child's mental health, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

## Sick Visits

We take seriously our commitment to seeing your children when sick. We know it has been very frustrating to have to see us first via televisit and then, on many occasions, get your child Covid tested. Trust us, we wish we could get back to the way it was, seeing your children in the office when sick, laying hands and eyes on them, listening to their lungs, checking their ears, etc... We miss this more than you can imagine. However, with the bulk of our patients vulnerable to a dangerous virus that can present in every imaginable fashion, sometimes asymptotically, we must remain vigilant against unwittingly spreading Covid at the office. We are currently seeing patients in the office with symptoms that are not Covid-related and after we have ruled Covid out with a PCR test. If we feel that we need to examine your child and we are still awaiting Covid test results, we are happy to do a parking lot visit. While not ideal, I hope you understand that we are doing our best to meet your needs while keeping the community safe. We are actively looking into ways to provide point-of-care PCR testing so that we can make this triage process less clunky and time-consuming. Please stay tuned.

## It's Time for the Flu Vaccine

We hope that by now you have received our emails regarding the flu vaccine. As always, we recommend all patients six months and older receive the flu vaccine. Last year, we held outdoor flu clinics for our patients (and their parents!). This year, we'll do the same. You can schedule online [here](#). If your child has a well visit during the month of October, we are happy to provide the vaccine at that visit. Please aim to get your child - and yourselves - vaccinated by Halloween.

## Communication with the office

We apologize for what we understand are very long wait times when you call our office. Like all healthcare entities, we are working under unprecedented strain and volume of calls. Please know that we value your trust in us and want to meet your needs in the same timely fashion that we historically have. We are making adjustments to our systems to handle this record-level of volume, and thank you in advance for your patience and grace in understanding.

Additionally, we have been very fortunate over the pandemic to have been able to communicate with all of you over many modalities for televisits. As a part of this process, you may have received access to your provider's cell phone. While this has served an important purpose during the pandemic, we ask that for all clinical and office matters, you continue to use the office line. When we are not open, you can always reach one of our providers through the on-call service. We appreciate your understanding in this matter.

As always, please feel free to reach out to your provider if you have any questions about the above.