



Nicole Bilotta <nbilotta@bbrsd.org>

Fwd: State of affairs: Parent edition

Jessica Deglialberti <jdegialberti@bbrsd.org>
To: Nicole Bilotta <nbilotta@bbrsd.org>

Thu, Sep 21, 2023 at 9:39 AM

Nicole,

Please put under the EBCFA folder for Tuesday's meeting.

Thank you, Jessica

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Jessica Deglialberti** <jessica.t.moore@gmail.com>
Date: Thu, Sep 21, 2023 at 9:08 AM
Subject: Fwd: State of affairs: Parent edition
To: <jdegialberti@bbrsd.org>

Of note, discussion on air quality. Also a large study on masks.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Katelyn Jetelina from Your Local Epidemiologist** <yourlocalepidemiologist@substack.com>
Date: Thu, Sep 7, 2023 at 8:34 AM
Subject: State of affairs: Parent edition
To: <jessica.t.moore@gmail.com>

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State of affairs: Parent edition

And what you can do this fall

KATELYN JETELINA
SEP 7

[READ IN APP](#) ↗

The start of the school year is here. To us parents, this signals the start of runny noses, fevers, tired kiddos, and lots of Bluey.

Here is your state of affairs and things we can do to prevent disruptions this fall.

Going into the school year

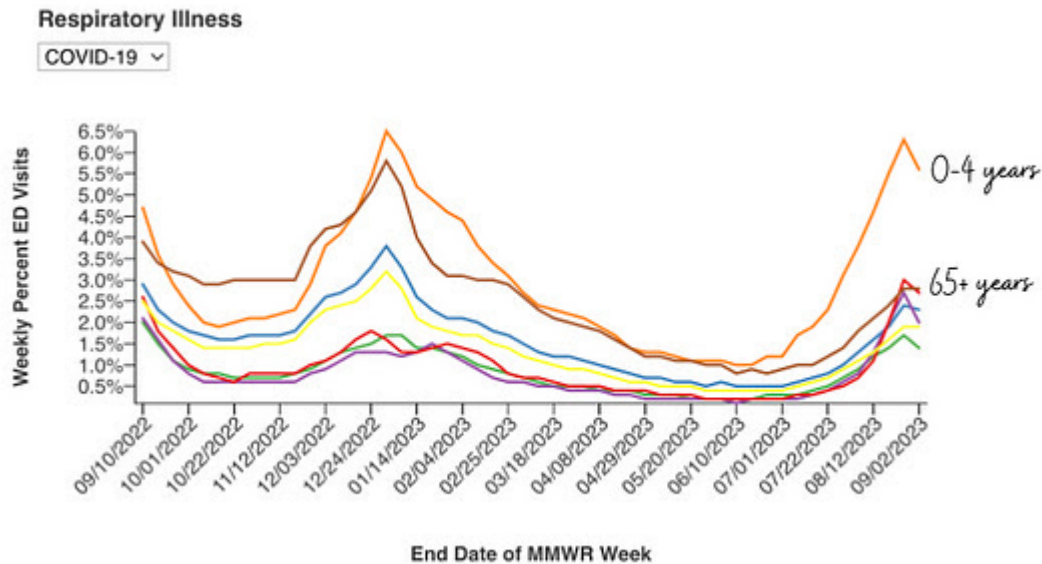
We are in the middle of a Covid-19 wave. This isn't necessarily because school started, but rather was jumpstarted in summer due to behavior change (hot weather —> moving inside), a mutating virus, and waning protection.

Currently, wastewater levels are on par with what we saw this time last year.



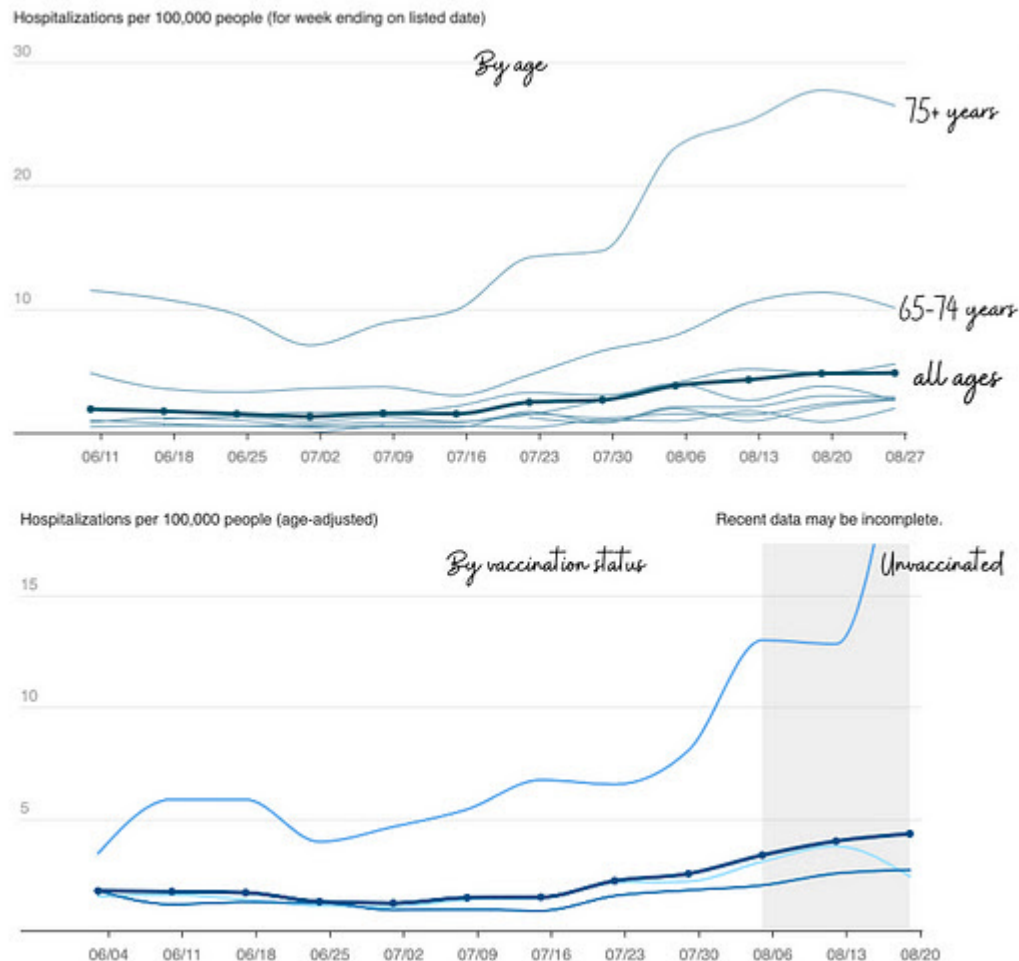
Source: Wastewater data from Biobot Analytics

As expected, ED visits are following infections. Covid-19 still accounts for the highest percentage of ED visits for those under 1 year old.



Source CDC with annotations by YLE

Hospitalizations lag ED visits but remain high among **older adults** and **unvaccinated** people (who presumably had a prior infection at this point).

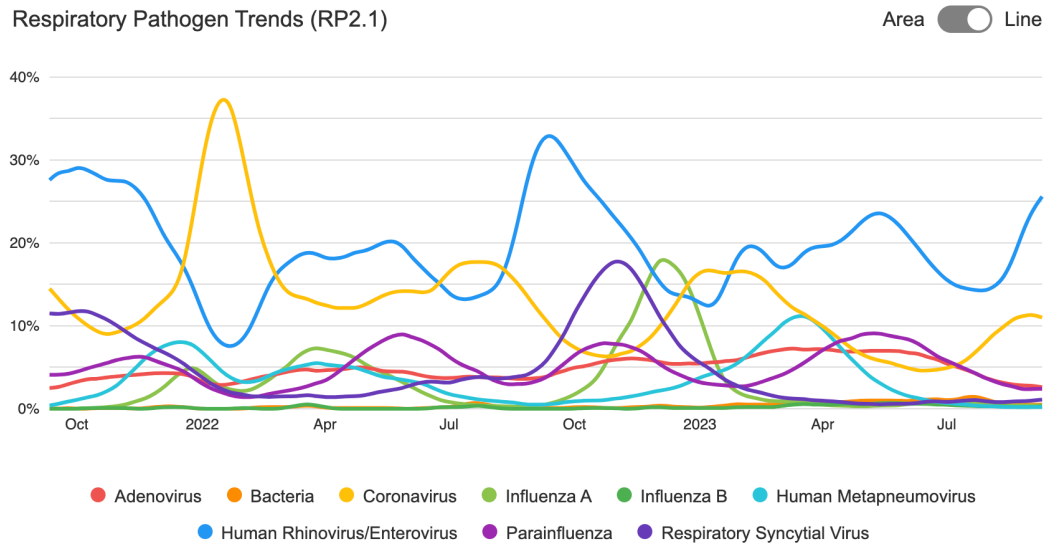


NYC hospitalizations by age and vaccination status. Source [here](#).

Annotations by YLE

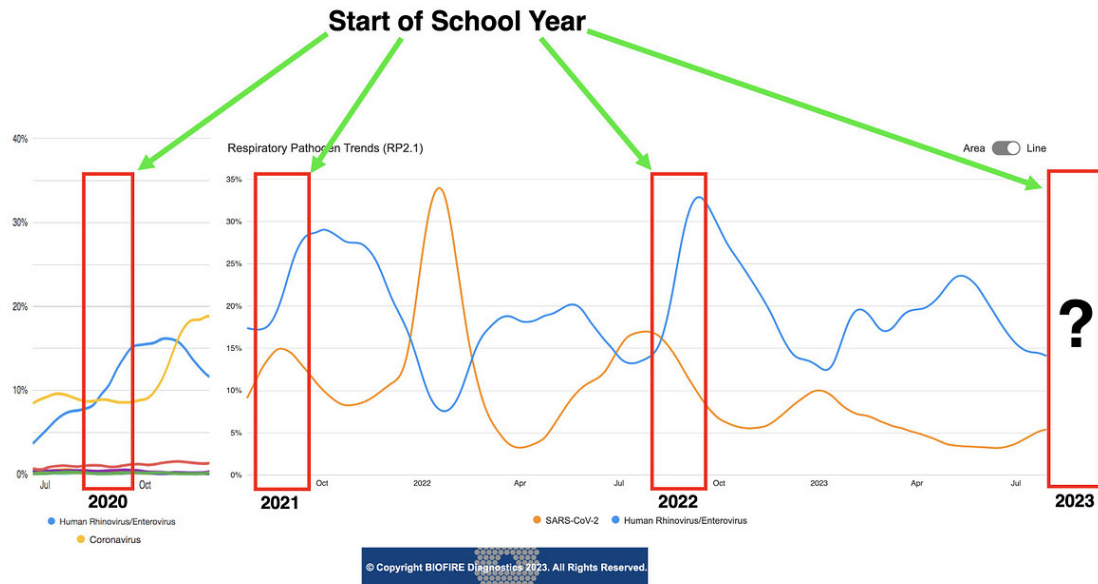
Start of school

As school starts, rhinovirus (common cold) and enterovirus (including hand, foot, and mouth disease) increase. This year is no different, with quickly increasing rates of illness.



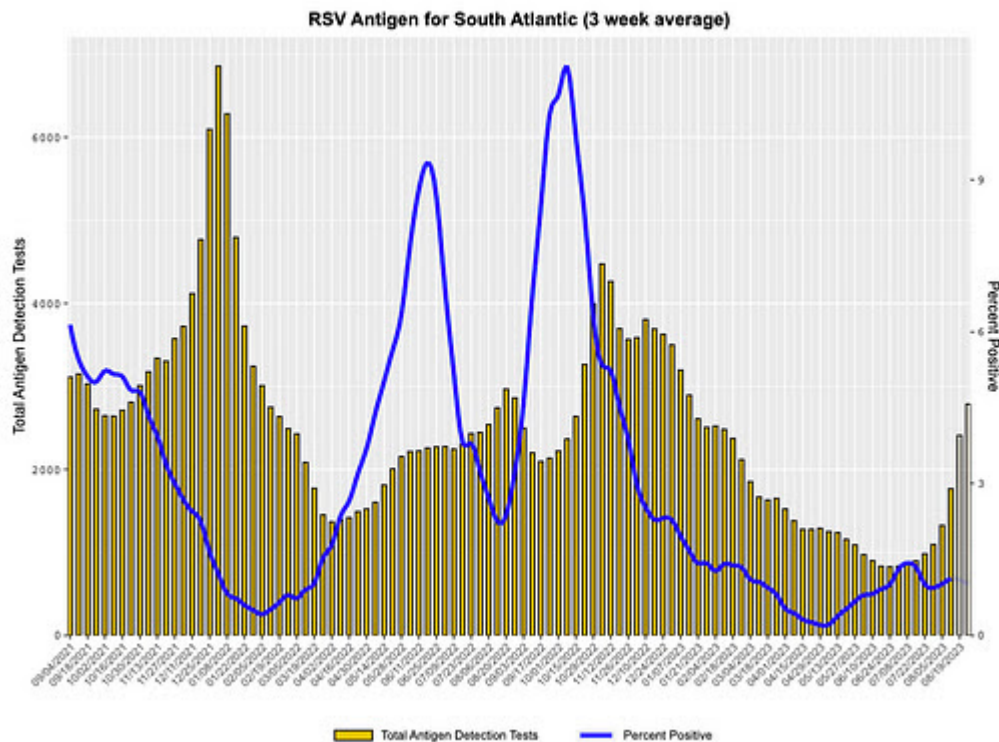
[Source: BioFire](#)

Interestingly, an increase in rhinovirus/enterovirus has coincided with a *decrease* in COVID-19 infections throughout the pandemic. Time will tell if this trend continues.



Data from BioFire; Figure by [Ryan Hisner](#)

Flu and RSV activity is still [low](#). Earlier this week, though, the CDC [warned](#) physicians of increased RSV activity in the Southeastern U.S. This typically signals the beginning of RSV season, in which the virus will subsequently spread to the Northeast and West over the next two months.



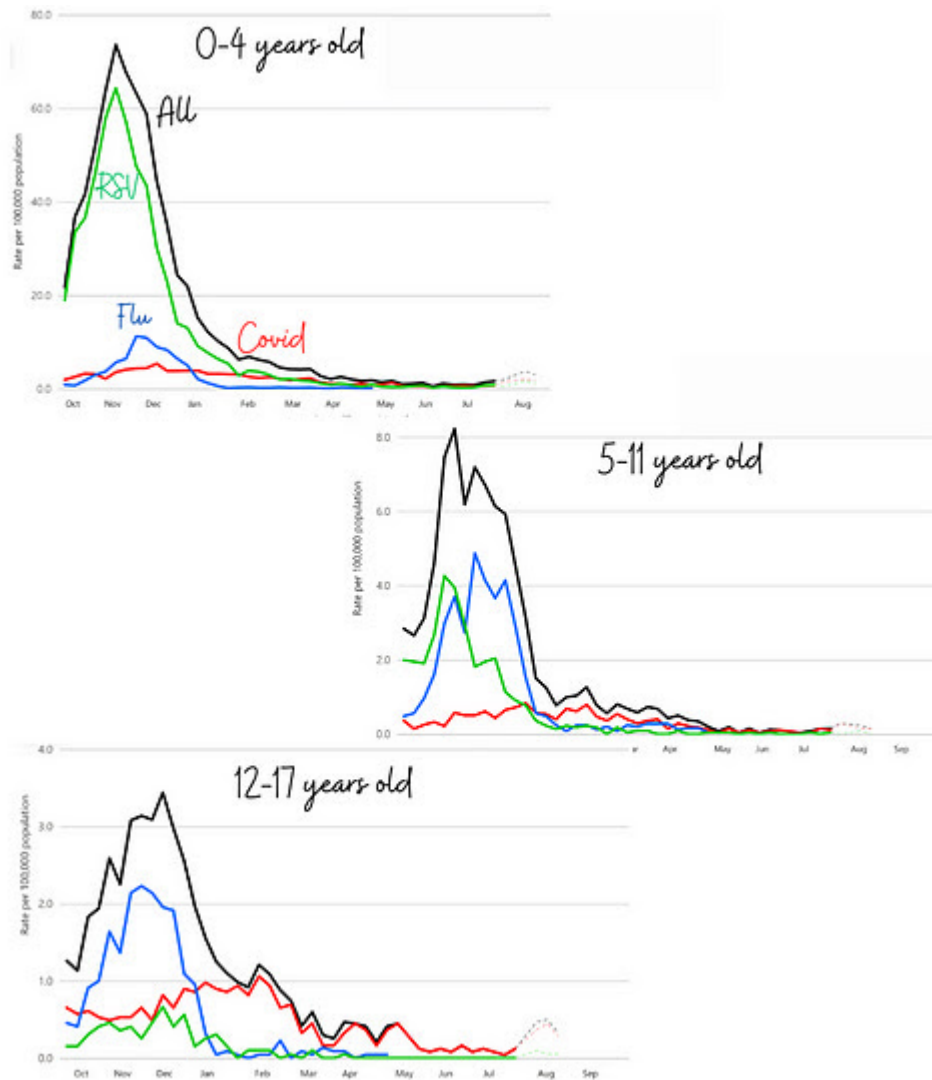
Source: [CDC](#)

What to expect?

If this season mirrors the last, we will have **unusual patterns** of respiratory viruses:

- RSV peaking in early November
- Flu peaking in late November
- Covid-19 peaking in late December

Nonetheless, expect illness. Last year, 1 in 4 students swabbed were positive for at least one virus in November. The severity of the threat depends on the virus and age bracket, as seen below in hospitalizations last year.



Hospitalizations per 100,000 by age and virus in 2022 season. *Keep in mind the y-axis changes for each graph.* [Source CDC](#); annotations by YLE

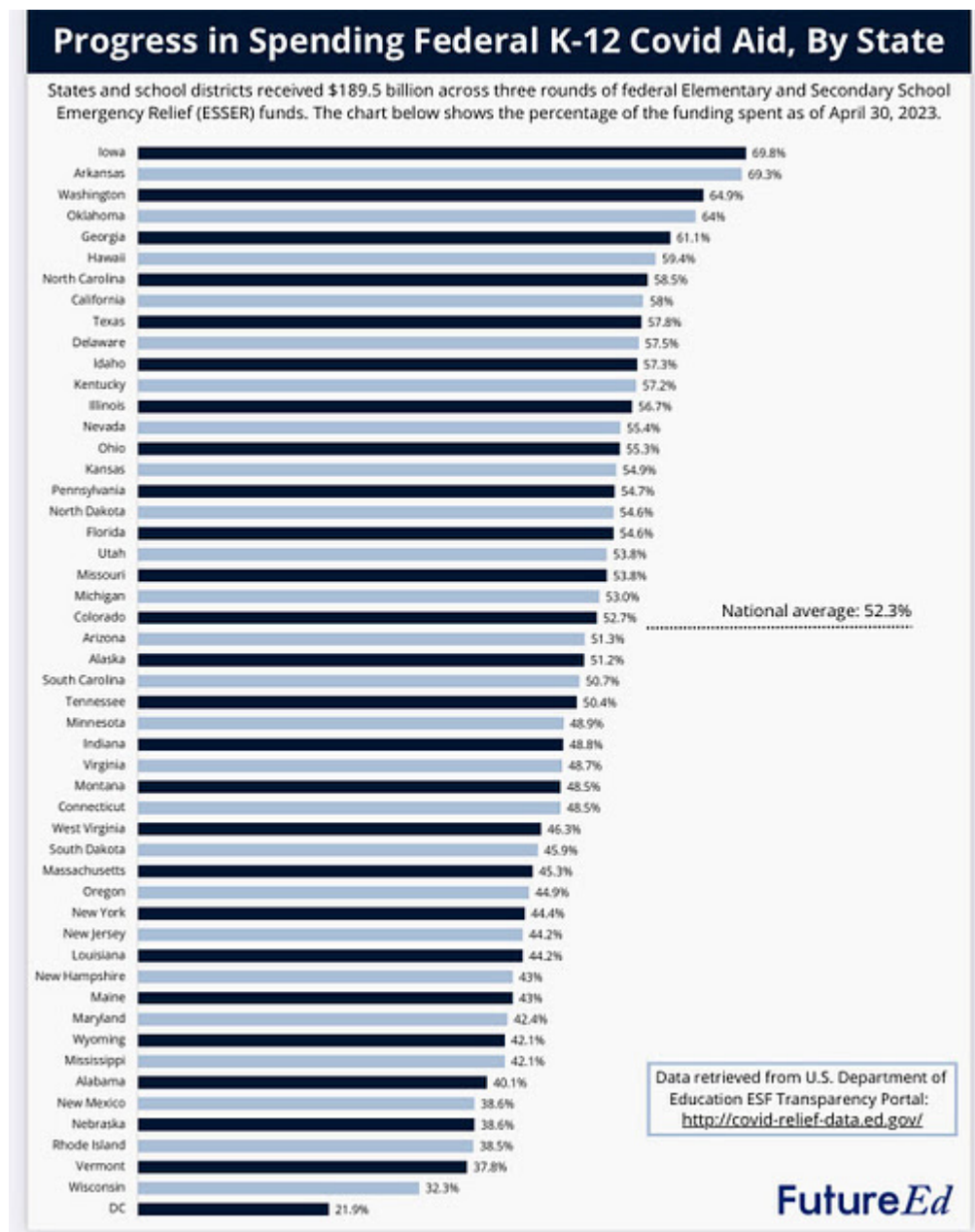
What can we do?

Improve air quality. Improve air quality. Improve air quality. This is a [powerful tool](#), as it happens in the background: an institutional-level intervention that works passively and invisibly on the individual level. One study found infections were [40% lower](#) in schools that improved air quality.

Advocate for your kids' schools to **optimally** upgrade their ventilation system. Last year, [70% of schools](#) reported upgrading their ventilation, but mostly with low-cost solutions like opening windows.

We can do better. A [large Italian study](#) found a 74% lower risk of infection in schools that upgraded systems compared to students in classrooms with just open windows.

There is federal money for this. But, as of April 2023, only 52% of the K-12 Covid aid money was spent.



At home, make sure to replace your filters after all the wildfire smoke this summer. Smoke particles reduce the performance of filters by 95%. This is because of the electrostatic charge wildfire particles carry.

HEALTHY BUILDINGS FOR HEALTH | **Advisory: Replace Electrostatic Air Filters After Wildfire Events** | HARVARD TH CHAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Electrostatic Filtration Effect
Some air filters rely on electrostatic charges to remove particles and improve air quality.

THE RISK
Heavy smoke can reduce the effectiveness of electrostatic filters by up to **95%***

THE SOLUTION
Replace your air filters to ensure good air quality.

REPLACEMENT FILTER

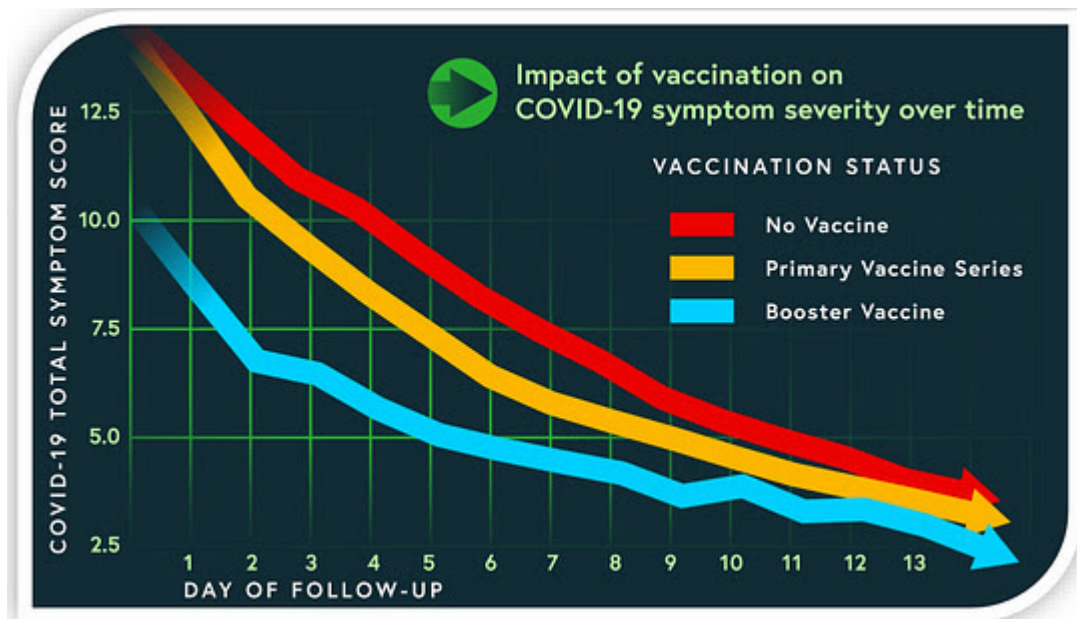
*Holder et al. 2022, *Indoor Air* | www.hsph.harvard.edu/healthybuildings | Scan the QR code to learn more

Vaccinations

For the first time, we have vaccines for the big three (RSV, Covid-19, and flu). They help against severe disease, symptom severity, and keeping kids in school. [Here are the options this fall.](#)

A few parent-specific notes:

- **Flu vaccine:** While protection wanes for older adults, it doesn't wane as quickly for children. They should get one now.
- **Covid-19 vaccine:** We should know next Tuesday *who* is eligible. Last fall, it provided **80%** protection against emergency room and urgent care visits among children. Even if you're not worried about severe disease, the vaccine **reduces the severity and length** of symptoms.



Source: *Clin Infect Dis*, Volume 76, Issue 3, 1 February 2023, Pages e1–e9, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cid/ciac772>

Masks reduce viral particles emitted and inhaled. In one of the best mask studies I've seen, **school mask mandates** also reduced transmission and absences. However, feasibility is challenging, given our increasingly individualized response and political inertia. If I had a healthy teenager, I wouldn't push one in school unless required, school was about to close, or hospitals were crumbling because of too much illness.

Antigen tests are a **great tool** to know when someone is no longer infectious. Be **wary** of false negatives at the beginning of symptoms, though.

Bottom line

Fall is here, school is in session, and viruses continue to thrive. This seems like a revolving door, but we can slow it down—for our children's health and learning, our sanity, and to help reduce the burden on schools, grandparents, and hospital systems.

From one parent to another, may the force be with you.

Love, YLE

"Your Local Epidemiologist (YLE)" is written by Dr. Katelyn Jetelina, M.P.H. Ph.D.—an epidemiologist, wife, and mom of two little girls. During the day, she is a senior scientific consultant to several organizations. At night, she writes this newsletter. Her main goal is to "translate" the ever-evolving public health world so that people will be well-equipped to make evidence-based decisions. This newsletter is free, thanks to the generous support of fellow YLE community members. To support this effort, subscribe below:

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Sincerely,

Jessica Moore Deglialberti