

The current pandemic has been stressful for all of our families. Some have suffered severe illness. Others have endured economic hardship. All of us have missed important events, activities, and socializing with friends and family. Unfortunately, we are likely only at the beginning of this struggle.

As pediatricians, we have been given the honor and privilege of caring for your children, and we try our best to do this using scientific knowledge mixed with love and compassion. One of the best ways to hold back the tide of infection is for everyone, including school-aged children, to embrace the use of masks in schools and public places. The scientific evidence that masking significantly reduces transmission of the novel coronavirus is now unassailable. Masking is safe for all but the very youngest children and those with certain disabilities. For these reasons, *we fully support the use of masks by our patients while in school and other public places, and we stand behind the decision of our educators to make masks mandatory for school attendance.*

We all believe that this issue is far too important not to address publicly. It is quite simple: masks save lives. They may be the lives of your children. They may be the lives of our teachers or those in our community who are older or medically fragile. They may be your friends or your family members. By lowering the infection rate, we can also avoid the devastating economic effects of more shutdowns, and we are more likely to be able to keep our schools open.

We owe it to our community to support this. Lives. Jobs. Open schools. Please help us continue to care for the families of Lee County. Be a hero and wear your mask in school!

Sincerely,

The pediatricians at Physicians' Primary Care of SW FL and Island Coast Pediatrics: