

# Statement on the Education Situation of Children and Adolescents

4 June 2020

Many countries around the world closed schools due to the current SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19) pandemic. This was a logical response in the early days of the epidemic when there was a lack of data and many unknown variables concerning Covid-19. After the ensuing months of data collection and scientific evidence and analysis gathered from around the world, evidence-based discussions can now take place to inform policy- and decision-making. One of the emerging areas of concern revolves around HOW TO EXIT FROM THE LOCKDOWNS and quarantines and WHAT TO DO ABOUT EDUCATION?

## Who is actually at risk or a danger to others in the corona pandemic?

Experts in virology, immunology and epidemiology have stated, based on the data, that Covid-19 is a virus that primarily affects the elderly with comorbidities and to a lesser extent, those who are immuno-compromised. Children are least affected and the risks to children are extremely small<sup>1</sup>. At the same time, studies show that children are not the primary vectors of transmission and rarely transmit the virus to adults.<sup>2</sup>

## School Closure and Child Health

There is a lack of medical evidence for the efficacy of school closures when dealing with Corona viruses, as children in general do not develop the Covid disease nor are they among the primary vectors of the virus.<sup>3</sup>

School closures deprive children of necessary relationships. The real experience of teachers is essential for the school development path of children because children learn through relationships—relationships with teachers, classmates and friends. Compelling the use of digital teaching methods for all ages is devastating for learning ability and development.<sup>4</sup> We are experiencing a drastic increase in unhealthy and addictive behavior regarding digital media. Children lack outdoor exercise, exposure to light and to nature. Every additional day that children are exposed to this situation endangers their health, weakens their immune system and puts a strain on our future.<sup>5</sup> Children with healthy immune systems should not be isolated or kept from attending school and playing together with other children.

## Exiting from the Lockdown / Quarantine – Reopening Schools

Illness is a natural part of childhood and part of the education of the immune system. Many experts cite the lack of evidence for school closures and recommend the re-opening of schools as a **first step** in exiting the lockdowns and quarantines.<sup>6</sup> This view is being reinforced by the reopening of schools in many Asian and European countries for example. Questionable mouth and nose protection among the healthy student population is a disproportionate and disruptive factor in the education process.<sup>7</sup> Five medical associations in Germany declared: "Day care centers, kindergartens and primary schools should be reopened as soon as possible", and "unrestricted".<sup>8</sup> In countries where schools have reopened, there have been no resulting increases in coronavirus infection rates.<sup>9</sup>

## Recommendations to Protect Childhood and Adolescence

- Reopen selected schools and day-care centers with face-to-face interaction as soon as possible in low risk areas.
- Conduct a rapid observation and assessment of these schools and implement re-adjustments as needed.
- Encourage appropriate hand hygiene—hand washing with soap instead of disinfectants at both home and school
- Effective mouth and nose protection only for teaching staff and educators with increased risk; For children 12 yrs old and above; but not for healthy children below 12 years old.
- Encourage well-ventilated classrooms with open windows
- Limit classroom population to 25 students with no further need for social distancing in school
- Encourage appropriate cleaning of surfaces instead of using disinfectants in schools and at home<sup>10</sup>
- Support immune system health through: adequate sleep, healthy diet, limited screen time, outdoor activity and a balanced rhythmical home-life.
- Children with fever, cough, or other symptoms of illness should be kept home
- Children who are immuno-compromised should be kept home and protected
- Families should be instructed to maintain extra protection of elderly relatives with existing conditions
- Families should be encouraged and enabled to make informed decisions as to what is best for them given their circumstances

*The opinions expressed here are based on the best available science at the present time and are not to be taken as absolutes. Decisions have to be made and for that, the best information from a rational medical perspective is needed. We, the undersigned, present in this document key information to help make informed decisions.*

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- 1 It can be assumed that the lethality of the disease Covid 19 in children is close to 0. (Global Covid-19 Case Fatality Rates. CEBM.net | Jason Oke, Carl Heneghan | Updated 28 May 2020). At the epicenter of the US epidemic, New York, the death rate per 100,000 for children 0-17 is 0.64. Updated June 3, 2020. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1109867/coronavirus-death-rates-by-age-new-york-city/>  
 "We do know that children are much less likely to get sick or show symptoms with Covid-19."  
<https://infekt.ch/2020/04/schulen-schliessen-hilfreich-oder-nicht/>  
 "COVID-19 appears to affect children less often, and with less severity, including frequent asymptomatic or subclinical infection." As quoted from Alasdair Munro, a clinical research fellow in paediatric infectious diseases, regarding the large review of 78 available studies conducted by the UK Royal College of Paediatrics.  
 In Iceland, where 13% of the population was tested, none of the 848 children tested were positive.  
<https://time.com/5831580/iceland-coronavirus-tests/>  
 "There has been a failure to clarify to parents the truth about the extremely low risk to children, and that has accompanied a gross failure to offer a rational medical perspective regarding schools reopening. Younger, healthier people have virtually zero risk of death and an extremely small risk of serious disease. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that of 54,861 U.S. deaths from COVID-19, only 12, or 0.02 percent, have been in children under 14. That compares to CDC estimates that childhood deaths from influenza are nearly 600 in the most recent data. Of 15,756 deaths in New York City, only eight, or 0.05 percent, have been in those under 18, a pattern confirmed globally. In France, the fatality rate estimated for those under 20 is close to zero, at 0.001 percent; in Spain, it's similar." Dr. Scott W. Atlas. Senior Fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution and the former chief of neuroradiology at Stanford University Medical Center.  
<https://thehill.com/opinion/healthcare/498180-were-risking-national-suicide-if-we-dont-adjust-our-pandemic-response>
  - 2 A nine-year-old French child with corona infection had contact with 172 people, but none of them were infected. This confirms earlier results that corona infection (unlike influenza) is not or hardly ever transmitted by children. <https://www.n-tv.de/panorama/172-Kontaktpersonen-von-Corona-verschont-article21727469.html>  
<https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/icelandic-study-we-have-not-found-a-single-instance-of-a-child-infecting-parents/>  
 Opening up schools and kindergartens is unlikely to impact COVID-19 mortality rates in older people, according to a systematic review that spanned 47 publications and was conducted by researchers at Karolinska Institutet in Sweden. The paper is published in the scientific journal Acta Paediatrica.  
<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20200520/Children-not-likely-to-be-main-drivers-of-COVID-19-pandemic-review-suggests.aspx>
  - 3 Prof. Dr. med. Pietro Vernazza (Swiss Chief physician of infectiology). <https://infekt.ch/2020/04/schulen-schliessen-hilfreich-oder-nicht/>  
 Op. Cit. Dr. Scott W. Atlas. <https://thehill.com/opinion/healthcare/498180-were-risking-national-suicide-if-we-dont-adjust-our-pandemic-response>
  - 4 Opinion on the situation of children and adolescents in the Corona Pandemic 2020. Educational-Medical Working Group Witten / Herdecke University. Signed by more than 60 doctors and scientists. [https://medsektion-goetheanum.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/StellungnahmeKinderundCorona-5.5.20.pdf](https://medsektion-goetheanum.org/fileadmin/user_upload/StellungnahmeKinderundCorona-5.5.20.pdf)
  - 5 Opinion on the situation of children and adolescents in the Corona Pandemic 2020. Educational-Medical Working Group Witten / Herdecke University. Signed by more than 60 doctors and scientists. [https://medsektion-goetheanum.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Statement\\_on\\_the\\_Situation\\_of\\_Children\\_and\\_Adolescents\\_Corona\\_Pandemic\\_2020-5-5.pdf](https://medsektion-goetheanum.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Statement_on_the_Situation_of_Children_and_Adolescents_Corona_Pandemic_2020-5-5.pdf)
  - 6 <https://www.aier.org/article/lockdown-free-sweden-had-it-right-says-world-health-organization-interview-with-prof-johan-giesecke/>  
 Prof. Dr. med. Pietro Vernazza (Swiss Chief physician of infectiology). <https://infekt.ch/2020/04/schulen-schliessen-hilfreich-oder-nicht/>
  - 7 Opinion on the situation of children and adolescents in the Corona Pandemic 2020. Educational-Medical Working Group Witten / Herdecke University. Signed by more than 60 doctors and scientists. [https://medsektion-goetheanum.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Statement\\_on\\_the\\_Situation\\_of\\_Children\\_and\\_Adolescents\\_Corona\\_Pandemic\\_2020-5-5.pdf](https://medsektion-goetheanum.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Statement_on_the_Situation_of_Children_and_Adolescents_Corona_Pandemic_2020-5-5.pdf)
  - 8 <https://www.spiegel.de/panorama/bildung/corona-krise-mediziner-fordern-komplette-schul-und-kita-oeffnung-a-4d1a0336-680d-4259-818e-7a263732f811?fbclid=IwAR0leMdJmLE9MNpGJkike09CCJ-ddF42CBUzxHWr2l4mHxwsUUqIwlcW4vk>  
 Full Statement accessible here: <https://dgp.de/stellungnahme-schulen-und-kitas-sollen-wieder-geoeffnet-werden/>
  - 9 <https://www.wsj.com/articles/is-it-safe-to-reopen-schools-these-countries-say-yes-11590928949>
  - 10 Recommendations from the Robert Koch Institute on hygiene (including surface disinfection in domestic and public areas): [https://www.rki.de/DE/Content/InfAZ/N/Neuartiges\\_Coronavirus/Reinigung\\_Desinfektion.html](https://www.rki.de/DE/Content/InfAZ/N/Neuartiges_Coronavirus/Reinigung_Desinfektion.html)