



## **PPS-PIDSP Statement on the Control of COVID-19 in Children**

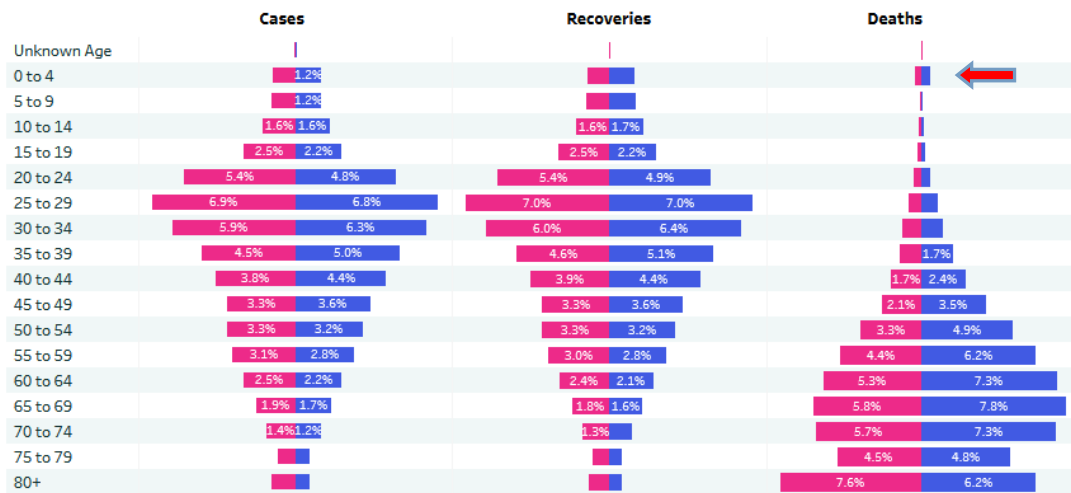
**November 11, 2021**

**The Philippine Pediatric Society (PPS) and the Pediatric Infectious Disease Society of the Philippines (PIDSP) call on the public to continue infection prevention efforts against COVID-19, with particular focus on protecting children by exercising prudence when bringing them out in public and by immunizing all those eligible for COVID-19 vaccination.**

Starting November 5, 2021, the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) has placed the National Capital Region under Alert Level 2 of its Alert Levels System for COVID-19 Response. This has allowed for more mobility amongst all age groups, including children. The overall decrease in COVID-19 cases can be attributed to the strict implementation of public health interventions and the increasing coverage rates of COVID-19 vaccination among the adult population. Nevertheless, immunization against COVID-19 in the pediatric population aged 12 – 17 years old has only begun over the past month. For children younger than 12 years of age, no vaccine has yet been approved by the Philippine FDA. As such, this population segment does not have similar protective immunity as that seen in the adult population, and children remain at risk of exposure and subsequent infection. It is also known that up to half of children can be asymptomatic when infected with SARS-CoV-2. For these reasons, the PPS and PIDSP remind everyone that until a greater proportion of children are vaccinated, prudence must be observed when bringing children out in public and all eligible household members and children must be vaccinated against COVID-19 whenever possible.

Children under 18 years of age comprise around 10% of the total COVID-19 cases in the Philippines. While risk for severe disease is higher as age increases, most recent DOH data (Nov 8, 2021) show that those in the 0-4 years age group have

more reported deaths from the disease compared to older individuals. There are no vaccines currently available to protect this age group from COVID-19. Thus, while vaccines provide an additional layer of protection, other infection prevention measures remain equally important as the pandemic is still ongoing, especially for those ineligible for vaccination.



*Figure 1. COVID-19 cases by age groups in the Philippines, including deaths; emphasis is placed on the increased mortality in the 0-4 age groups.*

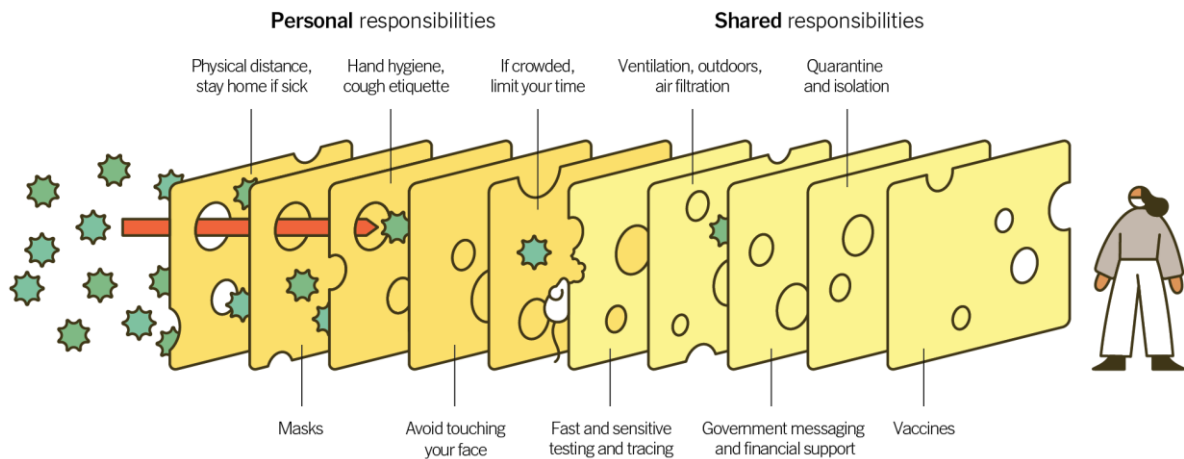
In this regard, parents and caregivers of young children, notably those below 5 years of age, are highly discouraged from bringing children to public enclosed or crowded spaces. As responsible guardians, they are urged to implement infection prevention and control measures, especially when going outside of their homes (i.e., prefer outdoor spaces, practice physical distancing and hand hygiene, wear face masks, among others). Implementing agencies of the national and local governments should: 1) relay constant messaging to the public about the need to continue infection prevention efforts; 2) implement the rules and regulations of Alert Level 2 in all aspects, including indoor areas and in public transport (i.e. a maximum of 50 percent indoor venue capacity for fully vaccinated individuals and those below 18 years of age, even if unvaccinated, and 70 percent outdoor venue capacity provided that workers of the said establishments are fully vaccinated); and

3) continue its active surveillance of COVID-19 infections to prevent another surge. Private establishments should also adhere to Alert Level 2 restrictions, including implementing the necessary airborne precautions especially in indoor settings including ventilation and air filtration.

And importantly, to optimize protection against COVID-19, all eligible Filipinos, including adult household members and adolescents, should get vaccinated against COVID-19.

### Multiple Layers Improve Success

The Swiss Cheese Respiratory Pandemic Defense recognizes that no single intervention is perfect at preventing the spread of the coronavirus. Each intervention (layer) has holes.



Source: Adapted from Ian M. Mackay (virologydownunder.com) and James T. Reason. Illustration by Rose Wong

**Figure 2. Multiple Efforts against COVID-19 infection, source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/05/health/coronavirus-swiss-cheese-infection-mackay.html>**