The Importance of Vaccines and Mask Wearing: A Memo from the UCI Healthy School Restart Working Group

Individuals who have been vaccinated and who wear masks indoors are protected from the impact of diseases caused by COVID-19 and its variants. They have also limited the spreading of COVID-19 and its variants to others, including children under 12, who are currently not eligible for immunization.

To Unvaccinated Parents and Family Members – Some Helpful Information*

There is a lot of misleading information on social media about the harmful impact of vaccines and face coverings. Much of this information is not accurate and may even be dangerous if followed by parents and family members. Please read more below:

1. Vaccination and Mask Wearing are Safe and Protect Health: Vaccination and mask-wearing will help protect most people in Orange County from becoming infected with COVID-19 and its variants. Vaccination will limit the transmission of the virus from one person to another. There will be “break through cases,” but the percentages and numbers will be low, and hospitalization rare. Public health agencies will likely be able to vaccinate children under 12 years old in the fall.

2. Vaccination and Mask Wearing Reduces Spreading Indoors: Considering the spike in the COVID Delta variant and uncertainty as to its future evolution, wearing masks, mainly where people gather such as restaurants, schools, sports arenas, and theatres, will reduce spreading. Keeping social distance is difficult in these locations, and the likelihood of transmission is higher.

3. Vaccination and Mask Wearing are Based on Science: Both have been researched by scientists over several decades. However, the research process is complex because the COVID-19 virus and its variants are complex. Unfortunately, the characteristics of the virus can change or mutate, sometimes quickly. Changes in policies and regulations should be expected and valued by Orange County residents, given the evolution of the virus. Following changing guidance is essential to respond to the virus effectively.

Increased vaccination and masking are a prerequisite to winning the fight against COVID-19 virus and its variants. Both can also help expand economic growth and reduce the educational and racial inequities that have impacted some members of our community more than others. Most importantly, wearing a mask and getting vaccinated will help keep students back in school full time. Working together with others in our Orange County community, we can make a difference and keep kids safe and in school!

Best wishes for a healthy and safe school year,

Orange County Healthy School Restart Working Group

*Based is based on current evidence and best data at the time of publication, including the following: School Administration Resources, OCHCA Revised August 2021; COVID 19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools in California, 2021-2022 School Year; Guidance for Covid 19 Prevention in K-12 Schools, CDC, August 5, 2021; Return to School Road Map, US Department of Education August 2021; American Academy of Pediatricians, COVID Guidelines for Safe Schools, August 18, 2021; Pediatrics, Inequities During COVID-19, August 2020.