



PANDEMICS - DATA & ANALYTICS

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PRESS RELEASE

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PANDA (Pandemics - Data and Analytics) welcomes the recent amendments made to the Disaster Management Act by the Department of Co-operative Governance with regards to the wearing of masks by children under 6 years of age. According to the adjusted regulations, [children under the age of 6 are no longer required to wear a face mask](#). This is aligned with UNICEF and the WHO recommendations. According to the guidelines set out by those global organisations, children under the age of 6 should not be required to wear face masks. In this regard, South Africa went well beyond existing guidelines in previously requiring the masking of children under 6 years old.

It is important to note the [WHO guidelines](#) further suggest that the masking of children between 6 and 11 years old should be risk-based, taking into consideration a number of factors, including the “impact of wearing a mask on learning and psychosocial development, in consultation with teachers, parents/caregivers and/or medical providers”. If these considerations are taken into account, then the masking children between 6 and 11 should not be allowed.

As PANDA, we maintain that there is no conclusive scientific evidence that supports the use of cloth masks or medical masks as a means of preventing infection in the general public as a whole, and in children in particular. This is supported by guidance issued by the WHO in December 2020, which states that “At present there is only [limited and inconsistent scientific evidence](#) to support the effectiveness of masking of healthy people in the community to prevent infection with respiratory viruses, including SARS-CoV-2.”

Furthermore, there is limited data available on the potential harm caused to children’s physical and mental health and socio-emotional development as a result of universal masking. Available studies on masking risks have been conducted only on adults, and for a very short duration of time. There are no available studies on masking over an extended time period, whereas members of the public are often required to wear masks for hours on end. Due to the limited availability of data on the effects of continuous universal masking, mandatory masking of the South African population, particularly South African children, can only be considered highly experimental.

OPEN SCIENCE. HUMAN AGENCY.

PANDA is committed to evaluating all prior and current research on the effect of masking mandates in preventing the spread of viral diseases and will publish findings in due course.

PANDA therefore approves of the effort by the South African government to put the health and well-being of South African children first. We believe that, given the lack of evidence of benefits to the general population and particularly to children of long-term mask wearing, ultimately ALL mask mandates should end.

LINKS

https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/202101/44066rg11223gon11.pdf

<https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-children-and-masks-related-to-covid-19>

<https://t.co/FArNGISzEc?amp=1>