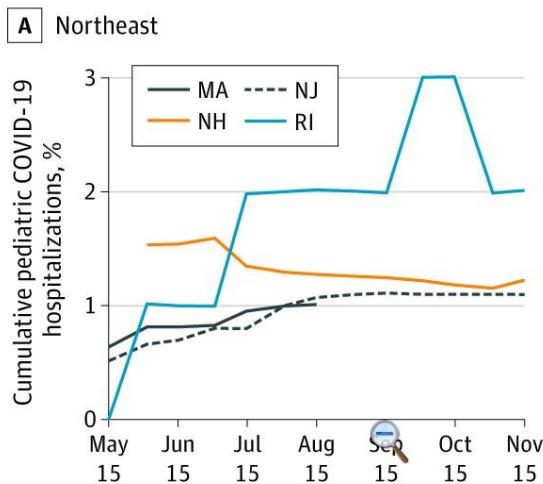


Covid19 Update



Infection rates in children <18 years of age in Western Mass as reported by Baystate Reference Laboratory has almost doubled in the last month. In early December, infection was 6.22%, but by December 26, it was 9.7% and then by New Year's, it was 12%. Last week, the infection rate in children in Western Mass was stable at 11%. Hospitalizations are also rising in the country, reflecting the higher infection rates. [Just published in JAMA](#), there were 5364 pediatric COVID-19 hospitalizations in 22 states between May and November, with large variations across states. rates per 100,000 in 4 New England states. The figure shows the percent of pediatric patients hospitalized with COVID19 in 4 New England states since the pandemic began. In MA, data was collected to mid-August and the percent of hospitalized patients who are <19 years old

increased to about 1%. We saw a small uptick in COVID19 patients admitted to our children's hospital in mid-December, but a fairly stable admission rate since Christmas. Overall, 2.2% of hospitalized patients at Baystate have been children <22 years. Also very reassuring is a publication this month in [Pediatrics](#) that indicates transmission of the virus causing COVID19 is low in schools. Researchers from Duke University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill found just 32 cases of in-school transmission among nearly 100,000 students and staff over a nine-week period. As more data is published indicating it is safe to return to school and as more teachers are able to be vaccinated, it is imperative for our children's education and development that they return to in-person school. Baystate Children's Hospital faculty are in strong agreement with the AAP that [children should return to school ASAP](#).