

**The Academy of Child and Adolescent Health strongly endorses The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons that came into force on January 22, 2021.** The Treaty puts nuclear weapons in the same category as other inhumane weapons that have been banned such as biologic and chemical weapons, cluster bombs and antipersonnel land mines. It makes the development, possession and use of nuclear weapons illegal for states parties to the Treaty. Over 50 nations, including New Zealand have ratified the Treaty. Australia has not.

Although we don't hear much about the dangers of nuclear weapons these days, the threat is very real. Currently there are over 13,000 nuclear weapons world-wide with almost 2,000 on "launch on warning" alert. Many atomic scientists and believe the threat is greater than it has ever been. The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists has moved the Doomsday Clock forward to just two minutes to midnight, the highest level since 1953 at the height of the Cold War. The risk is greater now, according to a 2018 analysis in the New England Journal of Medicine which pointed out the growing vulnerability of weapons systems to cyber-attack, making the danger of "accidental nuclear war" a real possibility. Nine countries admit to having nuclear weapons, some of them perhaps less responsible than we would wish.

The New England Journal analysis went on to point out that even a limited nuclear conflict, using less than 1% of the world's nuclear arsenal, perhaps initiated by a rogue state, would result in massive fires releasing millions of tons of smoke and soot into the atmosphere. This would result in substantial global darkening and cooling that would last for at least 10 years and disrupting food production worldwide and putting over 25% of the world's population at risk of death from starvation. It is well recognised that in all natural and human made disasters, it is children who are the most vulnerable.

Forrow L, Ruff T, Thurslow C. The 2017 Nobel Peace Prize and the Doomsday Clock. *NEJM* 2018; 378: 2258-2261