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Multnomah County issues universal mask recommendation as COVID-19 cases rise

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Status message

June 30: The State of Oregon has lifted most COVID-19 restrictions. Masks and physical distancing are no longer required in many businesses. Masks and physical distancing are still required in airports, on public transit, and in health care settings.

July 26, 2021

Multnomah County Public Health today strongly recommended that everyone 5 and older (2 and older if tolerated) wear masks in all indoor public spaces, regardless of whether they have been vaccinated.

The advisory was issued as COVID-19 [cases rise](#), largely due to an increase in social activities and the spread of the Delta variant, and primarily among people who are not vaccinated against COVID-19.

Studies show that universal masking reduces the risk of infection by at least 70 percent.

“We have an opportunity to make a difference in our county’s case rates right now. But if we don’t act, we can expect an exponential rise in cases, especially in pockets with low vaccinations. This could lead to preventable hospitalizations and even death,” said Public Health Director Jessica Guernsey. “Masking is a step we can all take right now to keep businesses open and move ahead with our plans for the school year. This is the thing that will make a difference.”

In issuing its recommendation, Multnomah County joins other jurisdictions that have issued similar advisories, including [Seattle-King County](#), [Los Angeles County](#) and [San Francisco Bay Area counties](#), and the cities of [Savannah, Ga.](#), [Long Beach, Calif.](#), and [Philadelphia](#).

Public Health encourages businesses to [download and post this Health Department sign](#) encouraging mask wearing indoors.

County health officials are particularly worried about the Delta variant, which is roughly twice as contagious as earlier strains of the virus and may cause more severe illness. As a whole, the Delta variant comprises about 90 percent of sequenced cases in the United States. The state of Oregon is already at about 80 percent Delta variant of recently sequenced tests.

Fully vaccinated people — such as those with two shots of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine, or a single shot of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine — appear to be well-protected from severe disease and death with Delta variants. However, people with only one dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine are not as well-protected. And even fully-vaccinated people can still become mildly ill and transmit the virus to others.

That’s why Public Health recommends that even vaccinated people wear masks in indoor spaces when the vaccination status of others is unclear. Currently, in Multnomah County and nationwide, the vast majority of people getting sick, going to the hospital and dying from COVID-19 at this time are unvaccinated.

“Vaccination remains the very best protection against this virus and its variants, so for anyone who can, don’t wait. Get your shot,” said Guernsey. “But we need a quick course correction to protect children and other people right now. And masks offer that protection.”

[Multnomah County health officials urge continued precautions as Oregon nears 70-percent first-dose vaccination target](#)

People who are not fully vaccinated against COVID-19 should continue to wear a mask even as State prepares to drop requirements in most public spaces

News

 [Multnomah County Public Health Advisory: Keep wearing your masks](#)

[Multnomah County moves to low risk Thursday, May 27, recommends masks for all indoor settings](#)

Multnomah County will move from “High Risk” to “Lower Risk” on Thursday, May 27, allowing more people to gather inside businesses, faith institutions, fitness centers, and other venues.

News



[Upcoming COVID-19 Vaccination Clinics](#)

See the schedule of clinics hosted by Multnomah County.

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[Business Tools and Guidance](#)

Tools and guidelines for running a business during COVID-19.

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