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Multnomah County Chair issues executive order mandating masks in all public indoor spaces

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Status message

[July 26: Due to the recent rise in COVID-19 cases, Multnomah County Public Health strongly recommends that everyone five years of age and older wear masks in indoor public settings whether vaccinated or not.](#)

August 9, 2021

Beginning Friday, Aug. 13, all people in Multnomah County will be required to wear a mask in indoor public spaces. Masks will be required, regardless of vaccination status, for all people 5 and older (2 years and older if tolerated).

Masks will be required indoors beginning Friday, Aug. 13, for all people 5 and older, regardless of vaccination status.

Chair Deborah Kafoury this week will issue an executive order that legally requires individuals and businesses to comply with the county-wide rule. The move comes after COVID-19 cases [surge locally](#), straining the health care systems that serve the metro area and many outlying communities. The mandate signals a new resolve by County leaders to act now to keep hospitals, businesses and schools open.

“Millions of Americans have been safely vaccinated, and are protected against becoming seriously ill or dying even from the Delta variant,” said Chair Kafoury. “But children under 12, immune-suppressed people and others enjoy no such freedom from fear. We have two important tools against this virus: vaccines and masks. And we’re going to use the masks until more people are vaccinated.”

The rule excludes people actively eating and drinking in food establishments. However, Public Health supports any additional steps private businesses choose to take to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

“The more contagious Delta variant has changed the game. Our hospitals are full,” said Health Officer Dr. Jennifer Vines. “And we now know that while the vaccine protects us really well from serious illness, it may not always stop us from spreading the virus. An across-the-board mandate buys us time to protect more people with vaccine.”

Enforcement will be based on complaints emailed or phoned into the County. The Health Department is currently finalizing its reporting and enforcement mechanism. That information, along with the executive order, will be posted on multco.us/covid19.

Violators could face a warning or a fine up to a \$1,000.

The sharp upward trend in cases and limping rate of vaccine mean the mandate is likely to remain in place until January. Although officials say that timeline could change, depending on disease trends and immunization rates.

“If we reach high levels of immunity this fall, we might be able to reduce mask use before January,” Vines said. “But if other variants emerge or we see other concerning trends, it could be longer than that.”

Chair Kafoury said that the County has heard from community members, many of whom have expressed support for the clarity, gravity, and the enforcement, of a mandate.

“Today’s action brings consistency to expectations and minimizes confusion in public, indoor spaces across the county,” Kafoury said. “But more importantly, it is a measure that we must take to protect each other -- all of us -- from a variant that is ripping through communities.”

Multnomah County is also preparing to implement the [state’s vaccine mandate](#) for people who work in healthcare settings and who have direct or indirect contact with patients or infectious materials beginning Oct. 1. The rule will cover nearly 2,000 County employees.

Chair Deborah Kafoury has asked the Governor to expand her Aug. 4 rule to include law enforcement and corrections officers, who are currently among [certain types of workers](#) for whom employers in Oregon cannot require COVID-19 vaccinations in the workplace.

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COVID-19 print materials in multiple languages

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Staying 6 feet apart, wearing a face covering, washing your hands often, and covering coughs and sneezes help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

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