



# PUBLIC HEALTH INSIDER

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OFFICIAL INSIGHTS FROM PUBLIC HEALTH – SEATTLE & KING COUNTY STAFF



## MASKS REQUIRED AT LARGE OUTDOOR GATHERINGS IN KING COUNTY, STRONGLY RECOMMENDED IN OTHER OUTDOOR SETTINGS

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*Public Health Insider*

King County, like much of the nation, is in the midst of a surge in COVID-19 cases driven by the highly contagious Delta variant. With high rates of disease spread, and our health care system straining to keep up, it is time to take additional steps to keep ourselves and our communities safe.

Therefore, Public Health – Seattle & King County is issuing a **Local Health Officer Order**. Beginning Tuesday, September 7:

- **Face masks are required at any outdoor event with 500 or more people in attendance.** This requirement applies to all vaccinated and unvaccinated people, 5 years of age and older.
- Masks are strongly recommended for everyone 5 years of age and older – both vaccinated and unvaccinated – in any other outdoor setting where people cannot remain at least 6 feet apart from non-household members.

King County Local Health Officer Order: Masks are now required at any outdoor event with 500 or more people in attendance. This order is for all vaccinated and unvaccinated people, 5 years of age and older. Graphics of people old and young wearing masks along the bottom of the image.

 Masks are also now strongly recommended for all people 5 years of age and older — both vaccinated and unvaccinated — in any other outdoor situations where people cannot remain at least 6 feet apart from non-household members. At the bottom, there is a graphic of two people that are less than 6 feet apart in an outdoor setting.

Masks are still required for everyone 5 and older in indoor public settings, such as grocery stores, malls, gyms, and community centers. This requirement supports [Washington's statewide order](#) for wearing masks indoors.

## **Why outdoors?**

The virus that causes COVID-19 spreads through the air. We know that outdoors, with its natural ventilation and airflow, is much safer than indoors. However, the virus that causes COVID-19 can still sometimes spread outdoors, especially in large groups where physical distancing is difficult or impossible. This is an even greater risk now that the highly contagious Delta variant is dominant in King County.

[Well-made, snug-fitting masks](#) provide crucial protection against COVID-19.

## **Why do unvaccinated *and* vaccinated people need to wear masks?**

While we have some of the highest vaccination rates of any large metro area in the United States, there are still approximately 750,000 people in King County who remain unvaccinated and susceptible to COVID-19. This includes children under 12 who don't yet have the option of getting vaccinated.

Vaccinated people are at much lower risk of catching and spreading COVID-19 than unvaccinated people, and the vaccines offer extremely good protection against severe illness, hospitalization and death. But the risk is not zero, even for vaccinated people, and the fast-spreading Delta variant raises the risk for everyone.

The latest surge of COVID-19 cases is taking a heavy toll on hospital capacity. Hospitals are more crowded than at any point since the pandemic began, and our healthcare workers are stressed and stretched thin.

Other counties and cities around the country are reporting their healthcare systems have run out of beds and oxygen because of the overwhelming number of COVID-19 cases. They are having to turn away people in need from hospital care. We do not want this to happen in King County, and that's why we're taking action.

The high rates of community spread and the large burden on the health care system mean that both vaccinated and unvaccinated people need to take extra precautions right now, including wearing masks.

King County's new order is consistent with the [latest guidance from the Washington State Department of Health](#), which strongly recommends that all people, regardless of vaccination status, wear a face covering in crowded outdoor settings.

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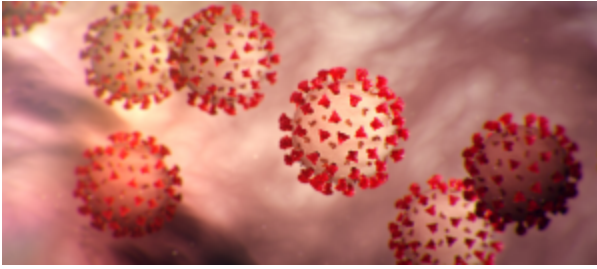
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## CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19)



For more King County resources on COVID-19, please visit: [kingcounty.gov/covid](https://kingcounty.gov/covid)



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