



## CDC lifts mask recommendations for many

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**Editor's note:** For the latest news on COVID-19, visit <http://bit.ly/AAPNewsCOVID19>.

Federal health officials are lifting mask recommendations for people in many parts of the country depending on local case counts and hospital capacity.

The [updated guidance](#) applies to schools but not [public transportation](#).

“With widespread population immunity, the overall risk of severe disease is now generally lower,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Rochelle P. Walensky, M.D., M.P.H., said at a press conference Friday. “Now, as the virus continues to circulate in our communities, we must focus our metrics beyond just cases in the community and direct our efforts toward protecting people at high risk for severe illness and preventing COVID-19 from overwhelming our hospitals and our health care systems.”

The CDC is categorizing communities' COVID-19 levels as low, medium or high based on the rate of new cases, COVID-19 hospital admissions and hospital capacity. Nearly 70% of the U.S. population is in a [location](#) with a low or medium COVID level.

People who need to mask in public indoor settings include:

- those in medium areas who are immunocompromised or potentially at [increased risk for severe disease](#) if recommended by their health care provider;
- everyone in high COVID areas, including in schools;
- people with symptoms, a positive test or exposure to someone with COVID-19; and
- people using public transportation.

People who are immunocompromised or at high risk for severe disease may consider masks or respirators that provide greater protection if they are in a high COVID area. Their close contacts also should consider masking around them.

The CDC previously recommended universal masking in schools. Officials said they decided to lift these restrictions in low and medium areas as children are at relatively low risk for severe illness.

The new guidance doesn't apply to a CDC rule requiring masking on public transportation. That rule will be reviewed in the coming weeks, according to Dr. Walensky.

People in every area are recommended to get vaccinated and boosted and to get tested if they are sick.

This is not the first time the CDC has lifted mask recommendations. It did so last May for people who were fully vaccinated. However, that guidance was short-lived as the delta variant sent cases skyrocketing. Dr. Walensky said Friday the CDC will continue to monitor the data closely.

“None of us know what the future may hold for us and for this virus, and we need to be prepared and we need to be ready for whatever comes next,” she said. “We want to give people a break from things like mask wearing when our levels are low and then have the ability to reach for them again should things get worse in the future.”

People can find their COVID community level at the [CDC website](#) or by calling 800-CDC-INFO.

## **Resources**

- [CDC guidance on masking and other precautions](#)
- [AAP interim guidance on face masks](#)
- [Information for parents from HealthyChildren.org on face masks for children](#)