



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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*****PRESS RELEASE*****

TWELVE BAY AREA HEALTH OFFICERS TO LIFT MOST INDOOR MASK MANDATES ON FEBRUARY 16

Masks still strongly recommended; vaccines and boosters urged to further strengthen defenses

In alignment with the State, the Bay Area counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Monterey, Napa, San Benito, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Cruz, Solano, Sonoma, and the City of Berkeley will lift universal mask requirements for most indoor public settings beginning Wednesday, February 16.

Unvaccinated individuals over age 2 will continue to be required to wear masks in all indoor public settings. Businesses, venue operators and hosts may determine their own paths forward to protect staff and patrons and may choose to require all patrons to wear masks.

The change aligns with the California Department of Public Health’s (CDPH) decision to let expire the statewide indoor mask requirement, which was instated on December 15 during the latest COVID-19 surge. **Indoor masking is still required by the State for everyone, regardless of vaccination status, in public transportation; health care settings; congregate settings like correctional facilities and homeless shelters; long term care facilities; and in K-12 schools and childcare settings.**

Bay Area health officers, in alignment with CDPH, continue to strongly recommend masks be used as an effective tool to prevent the spread of the virus especially when case rates are high, or when additional personal protection is needed. Continuing to mask in indoor public settings, especially crowded or poorly ventilated spaces, [remains the safest choice for an individual](#) and protects those who are medically vulnerable or are not able to get vaccinated, like our youngest children. As evidence continues to show, vaccinations and boosters remain the best defense against the virus.

The highly contagious Omicron variant brought on a new stage of the pandemic with a high number of new infections, but significantly fewer cases of life-threatening illnesses, especially for those who are vaccinated and boosted. While relaxing indoor masking requirements is part of a population-level shift toward a “new normal” of living with the disease, the Health Officers recognize that essential workers and communities of color continue to be highly impacted by COVID-19 and will need additional support to limit widening health disparities. Changes to health orders and recommendations may be updated as Health Officers follow the science and



the data to evaluate whether additional protective measures may be needed as the virus evolves and if future surges occur.

People should continue to choose layered prevention strategies, such as wearing well-fitted masks (N95 or double layer cloth over surgical are best); staying home and testing when symptomatic; testing before gatherings; and improving indoor ventilation in situations where these strategies can add protection for themselves and others. Staying “up to date” on vaccinations, meaning primary series and boosters when eligible, remains the most important way to prevent severe illness, hospitalization, and death.

Solano Public Health has observed a significant decline in the number of new COVID-19 cases throughout the county from 1,260 new cases at our peak on January 4, 2022, to 192 new cases as of February 6, 2022. Additionally, COVID-19 hospitalizations, a better indicator of COVID-19’s impact in the community, has been steadily declining and is below 100 as of February 7th. Solano County saw this rapid decline in hospitalization and cases due in part to our high vaccination rate (71%) and adherence to the masking guidance provided by the California Department of Public Health.

A combination of preventative strategies, which included mask use, vaccination, boosters and testing, along with the community’s cooperation helped get the Bay Area through this last surge together as a stronger community.

“We are encouraged by the progress we’ve seen within Solano County recently and will continue to monitor the case and hospitalization rates as we emerge from this surge,” said Bela T. Matyas, M.D., M.P.H., Solano County Public Health Officer. “The best way to move forward is for every resident to protect themselves, their loved ones, and the community by getting vaccinated and boosted. We encourage all residents to wear a mask, stay home when you’re sick, and get boosted when eligible.”

By aligning with the state masking rules, the participating Bay Area counties will not need to meet previously established [criteria](#) for lifting local masking orders, which were devised at a different point in the pandemic.

CDPH continues to require masking in K-12 school settings but has indicated adjustments to the state’s policies will be shared in the coming weeks. In the meantime, there is work to be done in closing the remaining gaps in vaccinations and boosters among children with a particular focus on equity gaps within the most highly impacted communities.



For early education programs, such as preschool and childcare settings, CDPH continues to require masking for children older than age two. Vaccinations for children under 5 are currently undergoing federal review. Workplaces will continue to follow the [COVID-19 prevention standards](#) set by CalOSHA.

Some people may understandably feel anxious about these changes to masking requirements in the county. People can continue to choose to wear face coverings around others whether it's mandated or not and should respect people's choices around their health. Community members who are vaccinated and choose not to mask should respect the choices of those who continue to mask. Officials ask residents and visitors to be kind and respectful as people evaluate their risks and make choices to protect themselves and those around them.

WHERE TO GET VACCINATED FOR COVID-19 DOSES, FLU SHOTS AND BOOSTERS

Pop-Up Clinics

For additional vaccine clinics throughout the County, visit <https://www.SolanoCounty.com/COVIDvaccine>.

SOLANO COUNTY COVID-19 INFORMATION

- Homebound individuals interested in requesting an in-home vaccination appointment are encouraged to call the COVID-19 vaccine line at (707) 784-8655 for scheduling assistance.
- Residents without transportation to and from vaccine sites hosted by Solano County are urged to call the COVID-19 vaccine line at (707) 784-8655 and arrange for a **free ride** through Uber.
- For vaccine clinics available throughout the State, visit <https://MyTurn.Ca.Gov>
- For recent local COVID-19 health information, including the number of COVID-19 cases in Solano County as reflected on the COVID-19 dashboard, visit www.SolanoCounty.com/COVID19
- Public Health Facebook page, <https://www.Facebook.com/SolanoCountyPH> and @SolanoCountyPH

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