

News Release

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Summit County Public Health Issues Updated COVID-19 Guidance Recommendations for Individuals Who Are Fully Vaccinated

SUMMIT COUNTY, OHIO—Last week, Governor DeWine announced most of Ohio's existing health orders, including the statewide mask mandate, will be rescinded on June 2. Following this announcement, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued guidance stating anyone who is **fully vaccinated** can participate in indoor and outdoor activities, large or small, without wearing a mask or physically distancing. In response, Summit County Public Health has created a list of frequently asked questions to help clarify what both these announcements mean for Summit County residents.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why now and what changed?

CDC guidance is based on the available science, and over the past few weeks, cases have continued falling dramatically, and a growing number of studies have shown three big things:

1. Our vaccines are working in the real world. Studies show them to be >90% effective in the real world settings in preventing mild and severe disease, hospitalization, and death
2. Our vaccines have proven to be effective against the SARS-CoV-2 variants currently circulating in the country.
3. If you're vaccinated, you're less likely to spread the virus. A growing body of evidence suggests that fully vaccinated people are less likely to have asymptomatic infection and to be able to transmit SARS-CoV-2 to others.

Taken together, this science is encouraging and shows that vaccinated people are protected and less likely to carry the virus to others. So, with all this evidence in mind, we are recommending that vaccinated people no longer need to wear a mask.

What about masks on transportation? Or airplanes?

If you travel, you will still be required to wear a mask on planes, buses, trains, and other forms of public transportation traveling into, within, or out of the United States, and in U.S. transportation hubs such as airports and stations. CDC will continue to update guidance and policies as the science emerges and more people are vaccinated. Fully vaccinated international travelers arriving in the United States are still required to get tested within 3 days of their flight (or show documentation of recovery from COVID-19 in the past 3 months) and should still get tested 3-5 days after their trip.

But why?

Many forms of public transportation include a large number of people—vaccinated and unvaccinated—in small spaces that could increase the risk for unvaccinated individuals. CDC is reviewing our guidance and policies (including the CDC Federal Mask Requirement) to determine whether changes need to be made.

How will people know if someone is vaccinated?

You may not know if someone around you is vaccinated or not, which is why we are encouraging everyone to get vaccinated – because we know the benefits: it protects you, it protects others, and it lets us begin to return to normal. So we hope everyone takes advantage of this important tool to stay safe and end the pandemic. Vaccination is safe, available, and free.

What does it mean to be Fully Vaccinated?

In general, people are considered fully vaccinated:

- 2 weeks after their second dose in a 2-dose series, such as the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or
- 2 weeks after a single-dose vaccine, such as Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine

If you don't meet these requirements, regardless of your age, you are NOT fully vaccinated. Keep taking all precautions until you are fully vaccinated. If you have a condition or are taking medications that weaken your immune system, you may NOT be fully protected even if you are fully vaccinated. Talk to your healthcare provider. Even after vaccination, you may need to continue taking all precautions.

Does everyone who wants a vaccine really have access to a vaccine?

As of April 19th anyone age 16 years of age older are eligible for vaccination, and as of this week the Pfizer vaccine is now available for anyone 12 and older. About nine out of 10 Americans live within 5 miles of a COVID-19 vaccination site. In the coming weeks, two popular ride-sharing services will offer free rides to vaccination appointments until July 4.

Are vaccines being distributed equitably?

As vaccine access increases, we are seeing increasing vaccination rates in communities of color. Over the past two weeks, vaccines in the Black and Hispanic/Latino communities have increased and now the proportion of vaccines administered in these communities is equal to (or greater than) their proportion of the US population. Working with trusted messengers in communities, we are providing access at the community level and making sure there is trust in the vaccine and the vaccinator.

But shouldn't we keep masks to protect against variants?

We are now sequencing ~10% of all virus in the country – we have a good picture of the variants that are circulating here. And, at this time, the vaccines we have available are effective against the variants that are circulating in the United States.

What if there is a surge or if other variants emerge? Will we need masks then?

The past year has shown us that this virus can be unpredictable, so if things get worse, there is always a chance we may need to make changes to the recommendations. But we know that the more people are vaccinated, the less cases we will have and the less chance of a new spike or additional variants emerging.

What about my child who is <12 years old?

A child under 12 years old who is not vaccinated will still need to take precautions, including wearing a well-fitted mask.

Are there any people who are fully vaccinated who should still wear a mask?

If you have a condition or are taking medications that weaken your immune system, increasing data suggest you may not be fully protected even if you are fully vaccinated. Talk to your healthcare provider. Even after vaccination, you may need to continue taking all precautions.

If I am in a community with a lot of cases of COVID-19, should I still take off my mask?

If you're fully vaccinated, the data are showing us that the vaccines are effective, and you are protected. That said, if you are in a community with lower vaccination rates and higher rates of disease, you may still choose to wear a mask to even further reduce risk.

What about masks in schools?

As of now, the CDC's school guidance remains unchanged. Most students will still be unvaccinated and schools should follow CDC's guidance for schools.

What about teachers?

Teachers, school administrators, and staff should continue to follow CDC's school guidance until more people and children are vaccinated.

Does this apply to all settings?

This guidance does not apply to healthcare settings (e.g., hospitals, long-term care, and doctors' offices). Guidance for residents and staff of healthcare settings can be found in the Updated Healthcare Infection Prevention Control Recommendations in Response to COVID-19 Vaccination. **This guidance also does not apply to correctional facilities or homeless shelters.** CDC is updating our guidance for other settings. CDC is updating our guidance for other settings. Fully vaccinated people should still wear well-fitted masks where required by federal, state, local, tribal or territorial laws, rules and regulations, including local business and workplace guidance.

Do I still need to wear a mask to work?

Fully vaccinated people should still wear a mask where required by federal, state, local, tribal or territorial laws, rules and regulations, including local business and workplace guidance.

Do people still need to wear a mask in correctional facilities or homeless shelters?

For now, fully vaccinated residents and employees of correctional facilities and homeless shelters should still wear a mask. Masking in these settings is still recommended because they may face high turnover of residents and a higher risk of transmission. CDC will continue to monitor new data as it comes in, including vaccine coverage in these settings, and review the science to inform our guidance and decision making.

What you can you do if you have been fully vaccinated?

You can resume activities that you did prior to the pandemic.

You can resume indoor and outdoor activities without wearing a mask or staying 6 feet apart, except where required by federal, state, local, tribal or territorial laws, rules and regulations including local business and workplace guidance.

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