

What does the City’s Latest Mask Mandate mean?

Effective August 9, 2021, a new Health Order issued by Baltimore City Health Commissioner Dr. Letitia Dzirasa requires Baltimore City residents and visitors to wear masks while indoors. Masks will not be required to be worn outdoors, although we still encourage residents to keep masks on their person (in a bag, purse, on their sleeve) in case they go inside a retail establishment, where masks are required. Also, we strongly encourage those not vaccinated to continue to wear a mask whenever they are unable to maintain social distance from others.

Why Now?

Delta is now the most common strain of the coronavirus in the United States, making up 93% of all new cases. [The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released recommendations for local jurisdictions to help halt the spread of the Delta Variant.](#) These recommendations were based on a jurisdiction’s level of community transmission. This is measured by the number of new cases, on a 7 day average, per 100,000 residents. Based on this metric, areas with more than 50 new cases per 100,000 residents are considered to have “substantial” risk of disease transmission, while those with more than 100 cases per 100,000 residents are considered to have a “high” risk of disease transmission. In both scenarios, it is recommended that jurisdictions take steps to drastically decrease the spread of disease. According to the CDC data for Baltimore City, we are now in the “substantial” risk category, with approx **50.89** cases per 100,000 residents, over a 7 day average for the time period between July 27th and August 2nd.

We know masking works. It has been proven to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Public health experts agree that disease transmission is much more likely in indoor spaces, especially when masks aren't worn. Requiring all residents, regardless of vaccination status, will help reduce the spread of disease.

When will the indoor mask order be lifted?

Baltimore City will review case data and positivity regularly and re-evaluate the ability to lift the order 2-4 weeks from initial mask order reinstatement.

Is the city planning to impose additional restrictions?

Not at this time.

Why is Baltimore’s indoor masking order stricter than other jurisdictions?

Compared to other jurisdictions, the Commissioner of Health for Baltimore City has more broad authority based on the City Charter, which allows for certain public health measures to be implemented.

Should I bring a mask with me when I leave my home?

Absolutely. Masks are proven to be effective at reducing disease transmission. While recent CDC guidance has shown that disease transmission is significantly reduced outdoors, indoor air circulation can still greatly contribute to disease transmission. As a best practice, we strongly recommend Baltimore City residents maintain a habit of keeping a mask in their bag, purse or on their sleeve, should they need to go indoors.

What is the City doing to get unvaccinated residents vaccinated?

To meet this new challenge posed by the emergence of the Delta variant, alongside our clinical partners, the Baltimore City Health Department is operating **dozens of vaccination clinics** each week, including clinics held during evening and weekend hours. All of this information can be found on our social media, as well as our website at baltimorecity.gov/bmorevax, or by calling **443-984-8650**. If you are unable to leave your home, you can also register for a vaccination at home by calling **443-984-2273** or visiting covax.baltimorecity.gov.

Should I wear a face-covering if I'm just walking down the street?

In light of the new information we have about the Delta Variant, wearing a mask should once again be a part of your normal routine, whether you are vaccinated or unvaccinated. You should *have* a face covering on your person every time you go outside. You should *wear* your face covering if you are coming into close contact (less than 6 feet) with other people, and you can't physically distance yourself from them.

Here's an example, say you are walking down the street, by yourself. If you can maintain a physical distance of at least 6 feet from others at all times, or if there isn't anyone else outside, you wouldn't need to wear a mask. But, if you are walking down the street and there are a lot of people outside and on your chosen walking path, you should absolutely wear your face covering. *Wearing* a mask will protect you and others, if and when you are not able to properly social distance.

In other words, "It's better to have a mask and not need it, than to need it and not have it."

When MUST you wear a face covering?

In any indoor space- **mask on!** with certain exceptions.

Do amateur and youth sports leagues need to wear masks if they're playing? What If they're watching others play?

Only if they are playing indoors.

What about live performances indoors?

Masks must be worn indoors, including when attending or participating in performances.

What about daycares or other childcare settings?

Face coverings are required for staff. They are also required for children over age 2, but there is an exception for children between 2 and 5 if it is not feasible for a child in that age group to wear one.

What about for children between 2-5 who can't wear a mask?

If a child between the ages of 2 and 5 cannot feasibly wear a face covering, they will not be required to wear one.

What about shared office spaces?

Face coverings are required in indoor office spaces where interaction with other persons will occur.

What is the guidance for masks in health clubs?

Face coverings must be worn inside fitness centers at all times except when swimming or where another exception might apply