

MEDIA RELEASE

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Indoor Mask Mandate Continues for Orange County

HILLSBOROUGH, N.C. November 23, 2021 — With several key COVID metrics increasing, Orange County will continue its indoor countywide mask mandate. The mandate applies to anyone 2 years and older, regardless of vaccination status.

Orange County is experiencing a surge in new cases, mostly among the unvaccinated, despite having one of the highest rates of vaccination in the state with 71% of the population fully vaccinated. Face coverings will still be required in all indoor public places, including public transportation facilities and vehicles. The mandate will be reevaluated mid-January.

“The mayors and I, in consultation with our health director, concur that requiring masks indoors in public spaces is our best course of action for the safety and well-being of the public at large,” said Renee Price, Chair of the Orange County Board of Commissioners. “The recent increase in cases makes it prudent to keep the indoor mask mandate in place a little while longer. We are still experiencing substantial community transmission, according to the CDC.”

The mask mandate does not apply to the following individuals:

- Anyone with a diagnosed medical or behavioral condition or disability, including difficulty breathing.
- Children under age 2.
- Children under 5 if a parent, guardian, or responsible person has been unable to place and maintain a face covering safely on the child’s face.
- Anyone who is actively eating or drinking.
- Anyone who is seeking to communicate with someone who is hearing impaired in a way that requires the mouth to be visible.
- Anyone who is giving a speech or performance for a broadcast or to an audience where a distance of at least 20 feet is maintained from the audience.
- Anyone who is working alone in an individual office setting. Face coverings must be applied when in common areas such as breakrooms, hallways, restrooms, or other areas where additional persons may be encountered.
- Anyone who has determined the face covering is impeding the person’s visibility in the operation of equipment or a vehicle.

With many families gathering for the holidays, masking up will help protect those who are not eligible to receive a vaccine.

[According to the CDC](#), Orange County has substantial community transmission, which includes a rate of 50-99 new cases per 100,000 people in the last 7 days. Orange County currently is at 77 cases per 100,000 people, with a 30% increase in cases compared to last week. Our positivity rate has increased over the last few weeks from 1.2% the week of Halloween to 2% last week.

“In 2020 we saw a spike in cases after Thanksgiving and another large spike in early January. We know that masks are incredibly effective at slowing the spread of COVID-19,” said Orange County Health Director Quintana Stewart. “Please remember that the No. 1 way to protect yourself and those around you is to get vaccinated. Ages 5 and up are eligible.”

Visit www.myspot.nc.gov to find a provider near you.

“As we head into the holidays, it’s best for everyone to play it safe and continue with indoor masking,” said Carrboro Mayor Lydia Lavelle. “COVID-19 remains active in the community. Folks are still getting their booster shots, and many age-eligible children are still in the first or second rounds of their vaccinations. Let’s get this protection to as many people as possible during this time so we do not go backwards.”

Hillsborough Mayor Jenn Weaver said, “I am so appreciative of our community’s continued dedication to doing our part to keep infection numbers low and to ensure less stress on our hospitals. I know we all look forward to a day when indoor masking isn’t necessary. But with an uptick in cases, 5- to 11-year-olds only recently eligible for vaccines and heading into the holidays when more people gather with family, this small act of courtesy can save someone’s life.”

Chapel Hill Mayor Pam Hemminger said, “In addition to protecting ourselves and our loved ones, wearing masks and getting vaccinated helps relieve the burden on our healthcare systems. Our hospital systems are currently facing staffing shortages and, as a result, rises in COVID cases can mean a shift back into crisis mode and a longer wait for routine healthcare services. This would not be a good outcome for our community.”

Related Documents

- [Orange County amended declaration](#)
- Orange County Health Department’s Face Covering Website: <https://www.orangecountync.gov/2435/Face-Coverings>
- Orange County Health Department’s COVID-19 Vaccine Website: <https://www.orangecountync.gov/2617/Vaccine>
- Orange County Face Coverings Required Signs for Business, version 1: [English/ Spanish](#)

- Orange County Face Coverings Required Signs for Business, version 2: [English/ Spanish](#)
- How to Use a Face Covering: [English](#), [Spanish](#), [Chinese](#), [Arabic](#), [Burmese](#), [Karen](#), [Kinyarwanda](#), [Swahili](#)
- Wear it Correctly: [English](#), [Spanish](#), [Chinese](#), [Burmese](#), [Karen](#)
- Should I Double Mask?: [English](#), [Spanish](#), [Chinese](#)
- How effective are cloth masks?: [English](#), [Spanish](#), [Chinese](#)

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