

MEDIA RELEASE

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Indoor mask mandate reinstated for Orange County effective Aug. 11 at 5 pm

HILLSBOROUGH, N.C. August 10, 2021 — With several key COVID metrics increasing drastically since the end of June, Orange County will reinstate its indoor countywide mask mandate effective at 5 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 11. The mandate will apply to anyone 2 years and older, regardless of vaccination status.

Face coverings will be required in all indoor public places, including public transportation facilities and vehicles.

“With cases of COVID-19 and its Delta variant surging across Orange County and the nation, we are issuing a mandate requiring adults and children to wear face coverings while inside any building,” said Renee Price, chair of the Orange County Board of Commissioners. “This step is essential if we hope to slow the spread of the Delta variant. If you know individuals who have been reluctant to get the vaccine, please take them to a vaccination site to get their shot and to protect yourself and your family members, friends and neighbors.”

The 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 they maintain 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.

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 76 percent of the population fully vaccinated.

For the week of June 20-26, the county reported nine cases out of 1,596 tests for a positivity rate of 0.6%. For the week of Aug. 1-7, it reported 235 cases out of 4,040 tests for a positivity rate of 5.8%.

"It is unfortunate that we have to reinstate the mask mandate at this time," said Carrboro Mayor Lydia Lavelle. "However, the rise in COVID-19 cases due to the Delta variant, predominantly and most seriously among the unvaccinated, has created the situation that we now find ourselves in. Ultimately, extensive vaccination is what is needed to contain this pandemic."

A positivity rate above 5% is considered one of the key indicators for increased spread. Recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also shows that vaccinated people can transmit the virus, particularly the highly transmissible Delta variant.

"Even though we have a high percentage of our eligible population vaccinated, we must use every tool at our disposal to combat this virus," said Orange County Health Director Quintana Stewart. "While masks are effective at slowing the spread, the No. 1 way to protect yourself and those around you is to get vaccinated. Many locations throughout Orange County now have the free vaccine. Visit www.myspot.nc.gov to find a provider near you."

With schools returning to in-person learning this fall, masking up will help protect those who are not eligible to receive a vaccine.

"What we really need is for folks who are eligible to get vaccinated to protect those who cannot be, including the thousands of children under age 12 in Orange County," said Hillsborough Mayor Jenn Weaver. "Vaccines are safe, highly effective against serious illness and death, and free. The goal is to end the pandemic, and vaccines are the pathway to that end, but we need folks to mask up as we continue to reach maximum coverage with vaccines."

Businesses are struggling to recruit and retain workers and are concerned that infected individuals may transmit the virus to their employees, which would then force them to close their doors again.

"It is deeply frustrating and concerning to see our numbers on the rise again – especially after many in our community have worked so hard to keep COVID from spreading," said Chapel Hill Mayor Pam Hemminger. "To keep Orange County open and to protect vulnerable individuals – including children under 12 who have not yet been vaccinated – science tells us that the best way to combat the virus is for everyone to vaccinate, mask up and spread out."

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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