



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



May 20, 2021

Universal Mask Policies in School Buildings

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), in consultation with the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH), issued binding guidance, [Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together](#) (AAA document) **requiring all students and staff** to wear a face mask when inside a school building, with limited exceptions.

This communication is to confirm that schools must continue to implement those [universal masking policies in school buildings](#). As you probably know, on Thursday, May 13, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) made the announcement that fully vaccinated individuals may stop wearing face coverings in certain settings. However, the CDC confirmed shortly thereafter that [it recommends schools continue to use the current COVID-19 prevention strategies for the 2020-2021 school year](#). Connecticut's protocols have been updated as well, via Governor Lamont's executive orders, which confirm that the binding guidance issued by the CSDE in the AAA Document is mandatory.

Specific to outdoor settings, masks are not required, but we recommend continuing mask wearing for students and staff in situations where students and/or staff are outdoors and in close contact while stationary (e.g., sitting/standing together in a group). Where students are actively moving around during recess or physical education activities, masks can be removed. Masks should also be on when going out of the building to recess and back into the building afterward. Good hand hygiene should be emphasized before and after outdoor activities.

We are proud of the meaningful progress Connecticut has made towards reducing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have all been consistent in applying our suite of mitigating strategies in the school settings, and agreed to [Finish Strong](#), acknowledging that schools are unique settings, and safe and equitable access is a top priority. Right now, many students are not yet eligible for vaccination, middle schools may have partial populations that are eligible while others are not, and some eligible individuals may not have been vaccinated and passed the required time since their shot to be fully vaccinated. **Therefore, the current rule requiring universal mask wearing for all individuals in all school buildings will remain in place at this time.**

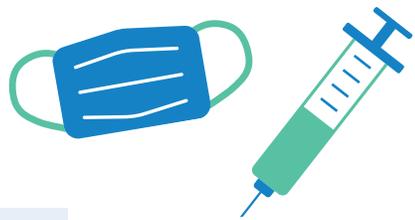
We will continue to monitor updated guidance from the CDC to inform planning for the summer and next year.

What You Need to Know: COVID-19 Vaccination, Mask-Wearing, and Social Distancing



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On May 13, 2021 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) made significant changes to their guidance for mask-wearing based on accumulating data about COVID-19 infections in vaccinated and unvaccinated people. Governor Lamont also announced that **mask-wearing rules will be relaxed on May 19, 2021 for residents and visitors to Connecticut who are fully vaccinated.** A person is fully vaccinated when 14 days (2 weeks) have passed since their final dose of the COVID-19 vaccine (i.e. their second Pfizer or Moderna dose or their first Johnson & Johnson dose).



What we already knew...

Based on scientific information

collected when the COVID-19 vaccines that are currently approved for use in the US were being developed, **it was clear that fully vaccinated people were much less likely to suffer from severe complications, hospitalization, or death if they became infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2).**

What we know now...

Based on new information

collected since COVID-19 vaccinations began in the US and other countries, we now know that even if they are exposed to people who have COVID-19, vaccinated people are very unlikely to become infected compared to unvaccinated people and, **even if they do become infected, fully vaccinated people are less likely to transmit virus to others** (even if those people are unvaccinated).



 For more information, please visit ct.gov/covidvaccine

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What You Need to Know: COVID-19 Vaccination, Mask-Wearing, and Social Distancing



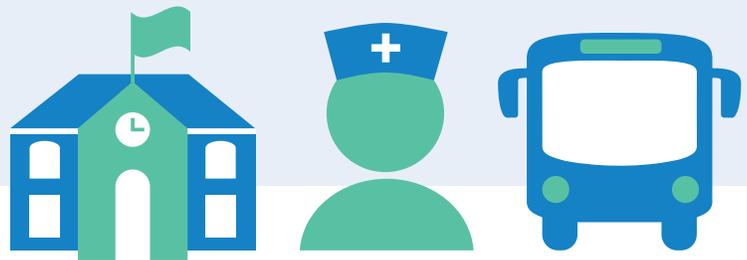
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What it means for Adults and Children...



All People (vaccinated or unvaccinated)

- Need to **wear a mask when they are inside a school building** (pre-K-12) or childcare facility.
 - Need to **wear a mask when they are inside a healthcare facility** (including doctors' offices, hospitals, emergency care settings, settings that provide physical/occupational therapy, and other patient care settings).
 - Need to **wear a mask when they are inside an assisted living facility, a correctional facility, or other congregate living setting** (such as group homes and residential care homes, homeless and other shelters). Nursing homes must follow CMS requirements for mask use.
 - Need to **wear a mask when they are at a transportation hub**, such as an airport, bus or train station, or **riding public or privately-hired transportation**, such as a train, bus, airplane, or ride-sharing services (such as Uber, Lyft, taxi).
 - Need to **wear a mask if they are asked to do so in a public or private establishment**, if required by their employer in their workplace, or when organizers require masks at any event.
- THIS IS BECAUSE:**
- These settings may be more likely to have people there who are **not able to be vaccinated** due to young age or a health condition.
 - These settings may be more likely to have people there who are at a **higher risk for severe complications** if they become infected.
 - These settings may make it more **difficult for people to keep their distance** and may include unvaccinated and infected people.
 - The **owner's or operator's preference** may be to exercise caution in protecting health without needing to keep people appropriately distanced or needing to determine whether or not a person is vaccinated.



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What it means for Adults and Children...

If Vaccinated...



- Can feel comfortable with **no mask or social distancing** both indoors and outdoors.
- **Do not need to quarantine** from work, school, or away from other people if they are exposed to someone with COVID-19 and do not have any symptoms themselves.
- **Do not need to get tested** routinely (e.g., as part of their work), before or after travel, or when they are exposed to someone with COVID-19 and do not have any symptoms themselves.

THIS IS BECAUSE:

- Even if they are exposed to someone with COVID-19, they are **very unlikely to get infected**.
- Even if they get infected, they are **very unlikely to get sick** or have serious disease.
- Even if they get infected, they are **less likely to infect someone else**.

If Unvaccinated...



- Are required to **wear a mask indoors**.
- Should **continue to wear a mask outdoors** when they are in a crowd, at a large event, or in a public place where keeping their distance from others is difficult.
- Should **continue to quarantine** from work, school, and away from other people if they are exposed to someone with COVID-19.
- Should **continue to get tested** when they are exposed to someone with COVID-19, before and after they travel, and if they are part of a screening testing program (e.g. as part of their work).

THIS IS BECAUSE:

- If they are exposed to someone with COVID-19, they are **at risk of getting infected**.
- If they become infected, they **can suffer from severe disease** and possibly be hospitalized.
- If they become infected, they **can transmit the virus to other people**.
- If they become infected, they can **pose a serious risk to other individuals** who are not yet vaccinated or cannot get vaccinated.



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What it means for Businesses...



Business Owners and Event Operators

- Should consider requiring customers to **wear a mask when they are inside an establishment or at a large indoor event or private gathering** if the space is not designed for continuous social distancing. If not specifically required, consider **posting signage indicating that unvaccinated customers are required to wear a mask** and any customer is invited to wear a mask if they are more comfortable doing so.
- Should consider requiring customers/attendees to **wear a mask when they are inside an establishment or at a large indoor event or private gathering** where there is likely to be a mix of vaccinated and unvaccinated people (including children younger than 12 years).
- Should consider requiring attendees to **wear a mask when at large outdoor events** open to the public and/or where large crowds are expected and unvaccinated people (including children younger than 12 years) are likely to be in attendance.
- Should require **employees to wear a mask if they are unvaccinated** or their vaccination status is unknown and they cannot maintain continuous separation from customers or coworkers.
- Should consider redesigning the space **inside an establishment or at a large indoor event or private gathering to allow for continuous social distancing** (or even extended distancing) when masks use may not be possible or practical (for example while eating/drinking or exercising).
- Should consider incorporating CDC's recommendations for **cleaning/disinfection, hand hygiene, and ventilation inside their establishments** to maximize safety for unvaccinated customers and staff.
- Should plan for **reduced capacity** (including denying entry to valid ticket holders) if a large outdoor event must be moved indoors and there are likely to be unvaccinated people (including children younger than 12 years) in attendance.

THIS IS BECAUSE:

- There is currently **no convenient, reliable, and consistent way to determine a person's COVID-19 vaccination status.**
- Many people who are infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 **have no symptoms but can spread the virus to other people** who are not fully vaccinated.
- Even though community infection rates are declining in Connecticut, there are still **many vulnerable residents and communities** in the state who are not fully vaccinated and could be severely impacted by COVID-19.
- There is **a continuing risk that businesses and large events could be a source of significant COVID-19 outbreaks** in situations where universal masking is not in use, many people remain unvaccinated, and appropriate spacing between customers, attendees, and staff cannot be maintained.

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