

To Mask or Unmask—That is the Question: What the New CDC Guidance Means for You

The State of Texas announced beginning on March 10, 2021 its ordinance on mandatory face coverings, aka face masks, would be rescinded throughout the State. This news was met with a variety of emotions and opinions. People immediately took to social media to proclaim their stance on the requirement removal. Another announcement was made about masks; however, this time it was from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Let's walk through the CDC's Interim Public Health Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People.



1. Who is a fully vaccinated person? A person who is two or more weeks out from receiving the complete vaccine dose based upon the manufacturer's instructions is considered fully vaccinated.
 - The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine requires two doses to be considered fully vaccinated.
 - The Moderna vaccine requires two doses to be considered fully vaccinated.
 - The new Johnson & Johnson vaccine requires one dose to be considered fully vaccinated.
2. So, you say that's you? Great! Here is what it means for you.
 - You may now gather indoors without wearing a mask or practicing social/physical distancing with others who are also fully vaccinated.
 - You may gather unmasked indoors with unvaccinated people from a single household who are at low-risk for severe COVID-19 disease if they were to come down with it. You may do this without practicing social/physical distancing as well.
 - If a fully vaccinated individual is exposed to COVID-19 but is asymptomatic, they may forgo being placed into quarantine as well as testing.

It is okay to insert the applause here, but not too fast on throwing out the masks!

- Fully vaccinated individuals should continue to wear a face mask in public and continue to practice social/physical distancing as well as follow other prevention strategies.

- Avoid medium-to-large in-person gatherings.
- A fully vaccinated individual should get tested if they are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.
- Follow the guidance issued by your employer.
- Follow CDC and Public Health Department travel requirements and recommendations.
- Wear masks when visiting with unvaccinated people from multiple households, e.g. parties or other gatherings.

As always, seek medical advice regarding your particular health concerns as it relates to whether you are in a position to unmask because of conditions that have impacted your health which may have caused you to be considered immunocompromised.

Currently 13.5% of the United States of America's population has received full vaccination. We are quite a ways from achieving the coveted herd immunity that will allow us to breathe easy again as we interact with one another without masks, social/physical distancing, or concern for crowds. Consider your reasons for determining whether you should get vaccinated, and discuss these reasons with a trusted healthcare provider and your family. As you see, we are making progress, but the more who decide to join the herd the faster we will arrive back at the state called "normal".

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Reference:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html>
<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2021/01/28/960901166/how-is-the-covid-19-vaccination-campaign-going-in-your-state>