



Updated 02/04/2022

Lifting Mask Orders FAQ

Why is TCHD lifting local mask orders in Adams and Arapahoe Counties?

- **COVID-19 Illness Trends Improving**
 - Based on Colorado, U.S. and international data and trends, it is likely that infections and hospitalizations have peaked statewide and will continue to decline in the weeks ahead.
 - Case trends following the widespread Omicron surge are now strongly falling even more rapidly than expected with similar declines in all age groups.
 - While rates in both counties are still very high, they have declined by over 60% since the peak on Jan. 11.
- **Growing Levels of Immunity.**
 - In addition to vaccine-related immunity, record numbers of recent cases have greatly enhanced population immunity. Counting vaccination, an estimated 80% of Coloradoans will have immunity by mid-February.
 - An increase of Delta is unlikely as early evidence suggests that having been infected with Omicron reduces susceptibility to Delta.
- **Increased Access to Prevention/Mitigation Measures.**
 - Vaccines, our best prevention measure, have now been available for all persons 5 years of age and older for close to 3 months.
 - Access to rapid testing has increased and individuals can now order rapid tests from the state and federal governments, see [CDPHE's Rapid At-Home testing program](#) and covidtests.gov for more information on ordering.
 - Access to higher quality masks has increased. For more information on state and federal distribution of high-quality masks, see [CDPHE's Where to get free KN95 and surgical grade masks](#) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [Wearing a Mask Protects You and Others](#) guidance.

For more detailed information on the rationale above, please see [TCHD's January 31, 2022 Special Board of Health Meeting recording](#).

When do TCHD's public health orders requiring masking go away?

Tri-County Health Department (TCHD)'s School and Child Care Mask Order will expire on Friday, Feb. 4, 2022, at 11:59PM. TCHD's Mask Order for all indoor public places will be rescinded Friday, Feb. 4, 2022, at 11:59PM.

Are requirements to mask going away because masking does not work?

No. Scientific evidence shows that the wearing of well-fitting facial coverings lessens virus transmission by reducing the spread of drops of moisture when breathing, speaking, coughing etc. Review the [CDC's Science Brief: Community Use of Cloth Masks to Control the Spread of SARS-CoV-2](#) for information on studies evaluating the value of masks. TCHD recommends that individuals, especially unvaccinated individuals and individuals returning to public places after

shortened isolation or during quarantine, continue wearing a mask in indoor public places, including schools.

Does this mean there are no longer any requirements to mask?

No. Colorado and the federal government have masking requirements in certain settings as outlined below. In addition, businesses and groups may choose to continue requiring masks to enter their space as a proven mitigation strategy for fighting the spread of COVID-19.

Businesses and groups requiring masking should continue following [CDPHE's Civil Rights guidance](#) to accommodate individuals that cannot wear a mask because of a disability. The following state and federal masking requirements are still in place:

- The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s [Requirement for Face Masks on Public Transportation Conveyances and at Transportation Hubs](#) is still in effect for all individuals 2 years of age and older. This requirement applies to school bus transportation. For more information, please see the CDC guidance page linked above.
- The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE)'s [Twelfth Amended Public Health Order 20-38 – Limited COVID-19 Restrictions](#) requires all unvaccinated individuals 12 years of age and older to wear a mask in (1) Homeless shelters, (2) Prisons, (3) Jails, (4) Community corrections programs and facilities, (5) all healthcare settings, and (6) public transportation. Please see [CDPHE's Public Health and Executive Orders page](#) for more information on all COVID-19 orders issued by the state.

Does this mean we will no longer have any public health order requirements related to COVID-19?

No. While public health orders requiring masking are being lifted, the decision by TCHD's Board of Health does not prevent TCHD from issuing public health orders in the future as conditions may dictate. [CDPHE](#) and the federal government may also implement requirements related to COVID-19. Current state and federal requirements related to masking are outlined above.

CDC's isolation and quarantine guidance recommends mask wearing for several additional days when returning to public indoor spaces. Is mask wearing required when using this shortened CDC isolation and quarantine guidance?

No, but TCHD continues to strongly recommend mask wearing. School districts, schools, child care facilities and businesses are encouraged to require masking for individuals returning from shortened isolation and quarantine as outlined in [CDC guidance](#).

If an individual is vaccinated, is it still recommended that they continue masking voluntarily?

Yes. Vaccination provides a high level of protection against serious illness, but you can still get infected with COVID-19 and spread the virus to others after being vaccinated. While masking will not be required by local public health order at this time, mask use is a critical step everyone can take to prevent getting and spreading COVID-19. Masking is particularly important if you:

- Or someone in your household is [at increased risk for severe disease](#) or has a [weakened immune system](#).
- Or someone in your household is not [up to date](#) on their COVID-19 vaccines, including timely boosters, or not eligible to receive COVID-19 vaccines.
- Have tested positive for COVID-19 and plan to return to public indoor spaces before 10 days have passed.
- Have had a known exposure to COVID-19 and plan to return to public indoor spaces before 10 days have passed.

- Will be visiting a crowded indoor place, particularly in a location with areas of [substantial or high transmission](#).

In general, people do not need to wear masks when outdoors. In areas of [substantial or high transmission](#), people might choose to wear a mask outdoors when in sustained [close contact](#) with other people.

How do I protect myself when others are not masking?

[COVID-19 vaccines](#) are the most effective step you can take to protect yourself from severe illness, hospitalizations, and death. And getting vaccinated is the best way to slow the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. CDC recommends that everyone who is eligible [stay up to date on their COVID-19 vaccines](#). In addition to up to date vaccination, individuals should:

- Wear a well-fitting mask. High quality masks are available for free through schools, state distribution, and federal distribution.
- Stay at least 6 feet away from others
- Avoid poorly ventilated spaces and crowds
- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds often throughout the day
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces daily

For more information, including specific guidance on each of the mitigation strategies above, see CDC's [How to Protect Yourself & Others](#) guidance.

If I am concerned about my health, who should I talk to?

If you have taken the steps outlined above, including up-to-date vaccination, and are still concerned about your health, you should speak with your healthcare provider. Your healthcare provider can discuss your unique circumstances to determine whether you should take additional protective measures. If you have a disability that requires additional protective measures, you can request reasonable accommodation from your school, your place of employment, or a business. See [CDPHE's Civil Rights Guidance for Employers and Places of Public Accommodation](#) and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's [What You Should Know About COVID-19 and the ADA, the Rehabilitation Act, and Other EEO Laws](#).