



San Francisco Department of Public Health

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***** HEALTH OFFICER STATEMENT *****

SAN FRANCISCO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH ADOPTS NEW PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDELINES ON MASKING OUTDOORS

SAN FRANCISCO, May 3, 2021 – Acting Health Officer Dr. Susan Philip released the following statement today after a decision by the state (available [here](#)) to generally align with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) new [guidance](#) on masking for fully vaccinated and unvaccinated people. For the purposes of this guidance, people are considered fully vaccinated for COVID-19 two weeks after they have received the second dose in a two-dose series of Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines, or two weeks after they have received a single-dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. Currently, individuals 16 and older are eligible to get vaccinated in San Francisco.

“The CDC’s announcement that fully vaccinated, and in some instances unvaccinated, people no longer need to wear masks in certain outdoor settings is fantastic news that reflects the science and data we now have on the efficacy of the vaccines in preventing community spread and driving down case rates and the minimal risk of transmission outdoors. We welcome the state’s decision to adopt these common-sense guidelines and we hope it further incentivizes people to get vaccinated as soon as possible. We are going to be updating our health orders and various directives to reflect these changes. That will likely take several days. However, our local face covering order will be updated sooner.”

“These changes mean fully vaccinated and unvaccinated people can forgo mask-wearing while engaging in outdoor activities such as walking, running, hiking or biking alone or with members of the same household. And, you will no longer need to pull up your mask when simply passing others by on a sidewalk or trail as the transient passing of people is not a risk of transmission. For anyone who is fully vaccinated, a face covering will no longer be required outdoors unless a more specific rule requires it, such as at a large sporting event. For people who are not fully vaccinated, a face covering must be worn if physical distancing cannot be maintained. For example, if you are not fully vaccinated and stop to have a prolonged conversation, or you are walking on a crowded sidewalk passing many people, you will want to put that mask on. And for now, everyone, including fully vaccinated and unvaccinated people, must still wear a face covering at large events or crowded



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settings outdoors. In San Francisco, this means any event or location with 300 or more people.”

“Because their risk level is significantly lower, vaccinated people now have more latitude and do not need to wear a mask for most outdoor activities other than those that are crowded. After we reach the state’s yellow tier, fully vaccinated people can also dine outdoors at a restaurant with friends from multiple households without masks. We anticipate that will begin on May 6 along with some other industry-specific changes. As before, fully vaccinated people do not need to wear a mask while attending small private gatherings indoors with fully vaccinated family and friends or with one unvaccinated household that is low risk for COVID-19.”

“We all still need to keep our masks handy as they should be worn outside if you are unvaccinated and cannot easily maintain 6-foot distance; in settings where other rules still require masking outdoors; as soon as you go inside to most business settings; or in large group settings such as outdoor music festivals or sporting events, including in fully vaccinated sections. When it comes to unvaccinated youth over the age of two, they should keep their masks on while interacting with other youth from different households in outdoor settings such as the park or at school recess.”

“While you may be able to walk to a destination without one, you’ll need to put your mask on when you enter an indoor public space such as a store, restaurant, gym, salon, or movie theater—any place where the vaccination status of other people is unknown. The federal masking requirements for public transportation will still apply, so you will need to wear your mask while waiting for and while riding public transit. We also urge vaccinated residents to wear masks when visiting indoors with unvaccinated people who are at [increased risk for severe COVID-19](#) or unvaccinated people from multiple households. Remember, choosing outdoor over indoor gatherings and activities is your safest bet.”

“We hope this news offers further incentive for people to get fully vaccinated as soon as possible. The longer you wait, including deferring your second shot if you need one, the greater the risk of contracting COVID-19 and passing it on to a friend, loved one or co-worker. Vaccines are generally available to anyone age 16 and older. Our continued success and our City’s economic health depend on everyone who is eligible getting vaccinated. San Francisco has done an amazing job throughout this pandemic because of everyone’s commitment to following the health guidelines. Let’s keep up the good work so we can continue to reopen our City and resuming the activities we love.”

The Health Officer will be issuing an update to the Face Covering Order very soon. Other items, including that Stay-Safer-At-Home Order and many directives, will be updated when the City is assigned to the yellow tier by the State in order to clarify additional situations where a mask does not need to be worn when outdoors. Visit [SF.gov/masks](https://www.sfdph.org/masks).

[CDPH Updated Guidance on Masking](#)

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