

Gov. Edwards Temporarily Reinstates Louisiana’s Statewide Mask Mandate as COVID Cases and Hospitalizations Threaten Hospitals’ Ability to Serve Communities...

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JOHN BEL EDWARDS



OFFICE *of the* GOVERNOR

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Today, Gov. John Bel Edwards has temporarily reinstated Louisiana’s statewide mask mandate indoors for all people age five and older as COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations continue to rise across Louisiana, threatening the ability of Louisiana’s hospitals to deliver care during this fourth surge of COVID. Louisiana is currently in the worst surge of the COVID-19 pandemic so far in terms of case growth rate, percent positivity and hospitalizations.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on Friday released data that shows that while vaccination reduces one’s chance of becoming infected with COVID-19, those who do become infected with the Delta variant despite being fully vaccinated are likely at risk of transmitting it to others.

Louisiana's temporary indoor statewide mask mandate will stay in place until at least September 1, but may be extended if necessary.

Driven largely by Louisiana's insufficient vaccination rate and the spread of the highly transmissible Delta variant, COVID-19 cases in the state have grown exponentially. Louisiana remains No. 1 nationwide for number of new COVID-19 cases per capita. The temporary indoor statewide mask mandate will help slow the spread of COVID-19 and limit suffering and death in Louisiana until we are through this fourth surge. The indoor mask mandate also applies to K-12 schools, universities, and other higher education institutions, which return to on-campus learning in August. In accordance with new guidance from the CDC, all people on campuses should be masked indoors, regardless of their vaccination status.

"It has never been more clear that we are in an unchecked COVID surge that, in addition to threatening the health and wellbeing of many Louisianans, also threatens the capacity of our hospitals and medical facilities to deliver care to their patients. That is simply unacceptable, and after reviewing new data from the CDC, speaking with public health advisors, and hearing from hospital leadership and the business community, I am reinstating Louisiana's statewide mask mandate indoors, including in schools to protect our children who are too young to be vaccinated and our teachers and staff," Gov. Edwards said. "This decision is not one I take lightly, but as the fourth surge of COVID-19 is upon us, we know that mask wearing when you are in public is one way to greatly lower your risk of spreading or catching COVID. Being vaccinated against COVID-19 is another. We have the tools we need to slow the spread of COVID-19 in our communities and save lives, and I am pleading with unvaccinated Louisianans to get their shot as soon as they can to protect themselves. We can end this nightmare, but it is going to take all of us working together to do it."

"The data in Louisiana clearly point to the severity of our situation, and the urgency to act now," said Dr. Joseph Kanter, State Health Officer. "Over the weekend we reviewed new data from the CDC showing that while vaccination reduces one's chance of becoming infected with COVID-19, those who do become infected with the Delta variant despite being fully vaccinated are likely at risk of transmitting it to others. This new information and other recent data showing the Delta variant is more than twice as transmissible as the original strains of COVID-19 bolster our recommendation to the Governor to put a universal mask mandate in place immediately."

- Click [here](#) to view the Governor's Updated Public Health Emergency Order and Indoor Statewide Mask Mandate.
- Click [here](#) to review data and slides presented at today's media briefing.

As has always been the case, local leaders may implement mitigation measures that are more comprehensive and restrictive than the current state guidelines, should they feel this is best for their communities.

STATEWIDE MASK MANDATE

Face masks that properly cover the wearer's mouth and nose should be worn indoors at all times, unless a person is in a home, under the Governor's statewide mask mandate, which will be in place until at least September 1.

The order requires face coverings for everyone age 5 or older or enrolled in kindergarten, except for the following:

- Anyone who has a medical condition that prevents the wearing of a face covering
- Anyone who is consuming a drink or food
- Anyone who is trying to communicate with a person who is hearing impaired
- Anyone who is giving a speech for broadcast or to an audience
- Anyone temporarily removing his or her face covering for identification purposes

Face coverings are highly encouraged for those ages 2 to 4 as tolerated.

As with the Governor's previous mandate, children younger than kindergarten age are exempted if they cannot wear a mask. However, the CDC and the Louisiana Department of Health strongly encourage indoor mask wearing in public for all children aged two and older, especially as they are not yet eligible for the COVID vaccine. Generally, LDH shares these reminders for individuals and families who are trying to stay as safe as possible during the COVID-10 pandemic:

1. If you can do an activity outdoors instead of indoors, do it outdoors
2. Follow good hygiene practices (wash your hands vigorously and frequently, and don't touch your face)
3. Stay away from crowded settings
4. Work virtually if possible
5. If you suspect you have been exposed to COVID-19, get tested immediately
6. If you're in an at-risk group, be extra careful
7. Everyone who is sick or who has COVID symptoms should stay home

GUIDANCE FOR LARGE GATHERINGS

Today, the Louisiana Department of Health additionally issued guidance to the public about large event gatherings during the fourth surge of COVID-19 in Louisiana, including ways to lower risk for both vaccinated and unvaccinated people.

LDH recommends:

- Limiting the size of indoor gatherings, moving events outdoors, or hosting meetings and events virtually to reduce the likelihood of COVID-19 spread.
- All participants of indoor meetings and events are required to be masked.

- People with underlying health conditions that make them more likely to have severe COVID complications should avoid nonessential trips outside of the home.
- Event hosts and facilities should practice strong sanitation and hygiene practices and provide hand sanitizer for those who need it.
- Spaces should be staged to accommodate at least six feet of distance between guests.

TESTING AND QUARANTINE GUIDANCE

Under guidance issued by LDH two weeks ago, all businesses should review their operations to accommodate employees in a way that reduces unnecessary contact to avoid the spread of COVID in the workplace.

In addition, all people should take a COVID test immediately after a known or suspected exposure to COVID-19 and take the following actions:

- If positive, they should isolate immediately.
- If negative, they should retest again between five and seven days post-exposure.
- If they develop symptoms of COVID-19 at any point they should test and immediately isolate pending the results.

This guidance will remain in place at least until Louisiana is safely out of its fourth COVID-19 surge, with additional guidance and mitigation measures put in place if and when necessary to slow the spread of the more contagious and virulent Delta variant and preserve hospital capacity.

At this time, the CDC advises that fully vaccinated individuals who are not experiencing COVID symptoms do not need to quarantine following an exposure to COVID-19, and LDH is not yet altering this guidance.

Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19, even those who are fully vaccinated or without a known exposure, should get tested.

Anyone who tests positive should immediately isolate. Isolation (for those who test positive for COVID-19) typically consists of:

- If symptomatic, at least 10 days since symptoms first appeared, symptoms are improving, and at least 24 hours with no fever without fever-reducing medication
- If asymptomatic but with a positive test, 10 days from the time the test sample was collected

Call 211 to find a COVID-19 testing site near you.

HOW TO GET A COVID VACCINE IN LOUISIANA

Everyone aged 12 and older is eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine in Louisiana. The FDA has only authorized one of the three COVID-19 vaccines – from Pfizer – for children ages 12 to 17. Parents should confirm with the vaccine provider that their child is under 18 to ensure Pfizer vaccine is available before making an appointment.

- COVID-19 vaccines are widely available at 1,437 locations in all of Louisiana’s 64 parishes, including at pharmacies, hospitals, health care clinics, and doctor’s offices.
- For a list of locations, visit LDH’s vaccine directory or visit [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov), which is maintained by the federal government.
- To get a list of vaccine locations near you text your ZIP code to GETVAX (438829) in English, or VACUNA (822862) in Spanish.
- If you have questions, would like to speak with a medical professional, or need help scheduling an appointment, call 211 or Louisiana’s vaccine hotline at 1-855-453-0774.

THANK YOU FOR
WEARING
A MASK.



The Delta variant is more transmissible and is surging.

Wearing a mask can help slow the spread of the coronavirus. Thank you for doing your part to keep our staff and customers safe.

