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## Guidance for the Use of Face Coverings

**Note: This guidance takes effect on June 15, 2021 and will supersede all prior face coverings guidance.**

### Background

The COVID-19 vaccines are effective in preventing infection, disease, and spread. Unvaccinated persons are more likely to get infected and spread the virus which is transmitted through the air and concentrates indoors. About 15% of our population remains without the option for vaccination (children under 12 years old are not yet eligible) and risk for COVID-19 exposure and infection will remain until we reach full community immunity.

The purpose of this guidance is to align with CDC recommendations and provide information about higher risk settings where masks are required or recommended to prevent transmission to persons with higher risk of infection (e.g., unvaccinated or immunocompromised persons), to persons with prolonged, cumulative exposures (e.g., workers), or to persons whose vaccination status is unknown. When people who are not fully vaccinated wear a mask correctly, they protect others as well as themselves. Consistent and correct mask use by people who are not fully vaccinated is especially important indoors.

In workplaces, employers are subject to the Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standards (ETS) or in some workplaces the CalOSHA Aerosol Transmissible Diseases Standard, and should consult those regulations for additional applicable requirements.

### Guidance for Individuals

Masks are **not required for fully vaccinated individuals, except** in the following settings where masks are required for everyone, regardless of vaccination status:

- On public transit (examples: airplanes, ships, ferries, trains, subways, buses, taxis, and ride-shares) and in transportation hubs (examples: airport, bus terminal, marina, train station, seaport or other port, subway station, or any other area that provides transportation).

- Indoors in K-12 schools, childcare and other youth settings.  
Note: This may change as updated K-12 schools guidance is forthcoming, pending updates for K-12 operational guidance from the CDC.
- Healthcare settings (including long term care facilities).
- State and local correctional facilities and detention centers.
- Homeless shelters, emergency shelters and cooling centers.

Additionally, masks are **required for unvaccinated individuals** in indoor public settings and businesses (examples: retail, restaurants, theaters, family entertainment centers, meetings, state and local government offices serving the public).

For additional information, individuals should refer to CDC Recommendations for Safer Activities (see CDPH Masking Guidance Frequently Asked Questions for more information).

## Guidance for Businesses, Venue Operators or Hosts

In settings where masks are required only for unvaccinated individuals, businesses, venue operators or hosts may choose to:

- Provide information to all patrons, guests and attendees regarding vaccination requirements and allow vaccinated individuals to self-attest that they are in compliance prior to entry.
- Implement vaccine verification to determine whether individuals are required to wear a mask.
- Require all patrons to wear masks.

No person can be prevented from wearing a mask as a condition of participation in an activity or entry into a business.

## Exemptions to masks requirements

The following **individuals** are exempt from wearing masks at all times:

- Persons younger than two years old. Very young children must not wear a mask because of the risk of suffocation.
- Persons with a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that prevents wearing a mask. This includes persons with a medical condition for whom wearing a mask could obstruct breathing or who are unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a mask without assistance.
- Persons who are hearing impaired, or communicating with a person who is hearing impaired, where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication.
- Persons for whom wearing a mask would create a risk to the person related to their work, as determined by local, state, or federal regulators or workplace safety guidelines.