

Boulder County's Universal Mask Requirement Ends Feb. 18

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Boulder County, CO - On Feb. 14, after receiving a detailed briefing from Boulder County Public Health (BCPH) experts and hearing public comments, the Boulder County Board of Health, voted to rescind Public Health Order 2021-08 and Public Health Order 2021-07 effective at 5 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 18.

Public Health Order 2021-08 required all individuals 2+ to wear masks in all indoor settings regardless of vaccination status. Public Health Order 2021-07 required masks for all childcare settings, PK-12 schools, and youth activities regardless of vaccination status.

Although masks will no longer be required by BCPH after February 18, Boulder County Public Health recommends all individuals 2+ wear a mask while around others. Schools, childcare centers, private businesses, and employers may choose to implement their own policy requiring masks for individuals in their space. Boulder County Public Health provides signage for entities that wish to continue requiring masking after the order requirements end.

To reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission for their staff and students, BCPH strongly encourages schools, child care facilities and youth activity providers to enact their own indoor mask policies. BCPH also recommends that private businesses and facilities implement their own vaccine or indoor mask requirements and policies to keep those they serve safe.

All existing state and federal mask requirements remain in place, including for ages 2+ on public conveyances such as school buses and public transportation and in Head Start programs, and for unvaccinated individuals ages 11+ in jails, prisons, health care settings, and homeless shelters.

“The most recent COVID-19 data for Boulder County is highly encouraging—73 percent of the county’s residents are up to date on their COVID-19 vaccination, the surge of the omicron variant has peaked and appears to be less severe than previous variants, including in children, and new cases and positive tests are declining. Residents over the age of 5 can easily access a free, safe and highly effective vaccine and new treatment options have been approved and are being distributed,” said Camille Rodriguez, Boulder County Public Health Executive Director. “Despite those positive trends, not all the news is good. The number of COVID-19 deaths in Boulder County continues to increase and, although hospitalizations are decreasing, new COVID-19 cases continue to add strain to the county’s already over-taxed health care providers.”

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) projects that immunity to the omicron variant will continue to rise. Omicron currently accounts for 98.4% of cases in Colorado and CDPHE modeling estimates that 80% of Colorado’s population now have some level of immunity because they have either been vaccinated, infected with the omicron variant, or both.

“While these trends are promising, the risk of serious illness and hospitalization remains, particularly for the most vulnerable members of the county. COVID-19 is still a potentially deadly virus and everyone should continue to take steps to protect themselves and at-risk community members,” said Rodriguez. “The best way to protect yourself and your loved ones is to get vaccinated, continue wearing a medical-grade mask when indoors—especially if you are unvaccinated—and, if you feel unwell, get tested and don’t go to work or school, regardless of your vaccination status. BCPH will provide more detailed

guidance for individuals to help guide decision making and protect themselves and their loved ones in the coming weeks.”

Here are some steps you can take to keep yourself, your family, friends and community safe:

- Get vaccinated and boosted –Get vaccinated against COVID-19, including the booster, and get your flu vaccine. Vaccines are safe, effective and free and provide significant protection against severe illness and hospitalization from the omicron variant. An up-to-date list of vaccine providers can be found at [org/CovidVaccine](https://www.cdc.gov/covidvaccine/).
- Wear a mask –BCPH strongly recommends individuals 2+ wear an N95, KN95, KF94 or equivalent medical-grade mask over your nose and mouth while indoors and consider wearing a mask in crowded outdoor settings while the county remains at a level of substantial or high transmission. CDPHE provides details on how to get free masks.
- Increase airflow and ventilation –Move gatherings outdoors when possible. While indoors, use HEPA filters or increase ventilation and airflow by opening windows or increasing air circulation.
- Wash your hands –Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand rub that contains 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Stay home if you’re sick –If you feel sick (fever, cough, difficulty breathing, fatigue, body aches, headache, loss of taste or smell or sore throat), stay home, get tested. Individuals should still adhere to isolation and quarantine guidance, including wearing a mask for five days after an initial five-day isolation period when in any public indoor setting.