

Office of the Director

401 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1300
Seattle, WA 98104-1818

206-296-4600 Fax 206-296-0166

TTY Relay: 711

www.kingcounty.gov/health

LOCAL HEALTH OFFICER INDOOR MASKING DIRECTIVE

Whereas state law, RCW 70.05.070(2) - (3), requires and empowers the Local Health Officer to take such action as is necessary to maintain health and to control and prevent the spread of any contagious or infectious diseases within the jurisdiction, and;

Whereas state regulation, WAC 246-100-036, requires the Local Health Officer, when necessary, to institute disease control measures as he, she, or they deem necessary based on his, her, or their professional judgment, current standards of practice, and the best available medical and scientific information;

Whereas SARS-CoV-2 spreads from person to person primarily through inhalation of air carrying very small droplets and aerosol particles that contain infectious virus, and;

Whereas the risk of transmission is greatest within three to six feet of an infectious source, but can also occur more than six feet away; and;

Whereas COVID-19 infections can be spread from persons who are symptom-free and before symptoms appear, and;

Whereas fully vaccinated people have a very high level of protection against CoV-19 compared to unvaccinated, with a much lower chance of getting sick or spreading it to others;

Whereas, the CDC recently issued guidance announcing that fully vaccinated individuals may safely congregate within indoor spaces with both fully vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals. However, the CDC also stated that this guidance should be interpreted in the context of current **local** CoV-2 transmission and vaccination levels;

Whereas in King County CoV-2 transmission level are falling but remain substantial, with higher rates among young to middle aged adults and teens, in south and southeast King County, and in Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Black, and Native American/Alaska Native communities, also disproportionately affecting essential workers and multi-generational households;

Whereas currently only some 57% of King County residents ages 16 and older are fully vaccinated against CoV-19;

Whereas in King County CoV-19 vaccine coverage rates vary by age, race, ethnicity, and geography. The CoV-19 vaccine completion rate is significantly lower in younger age groups (15% in 12-19 years old, 41% in 20-29 years old; 49% in 30-39 years old populations), and among Black (37%) and Hispanic (36%) community members and in certain neighborhoods in south and southeast King County, exacerbated by underlying social determinants of health;

Whereas when CoV-19 spreads at a high rate among the unvaccinated, the risk of being *exposed* is higher for everyone – vaccinated and unvaccinated – and more infections will occur, primarily among unvaccinated people, and;

Whereas when unvaccinated people gather indoors, especially without wearing masks, they are at risk both of getting CoV-19 themselves as well as spreading it to others. The risk of exposure is especially higher in crowded indoor spaces with unvaccinated people, poor ventilation, and activities among unvaccinated people that can increase the amount of virus in the air such as singing, shouting and aerobic exercise;

Whereas in any public spaces, there is currently no practical way to know who is or is not vaccinated;

Whereas, Public Health – Seattle & King County has established the goal and is on track of achieving 70% CoV-19 vaccination coverage of adults 16 years of age and older by June 30, 2021, and such coverage is expected to significantly reduce the risk of CoV-19 transmission in the County;

Whereas, people are considered fully vaccinated 2 weeks after their second dose in a 2-dose series, such as the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or 2 weeks after a single-dose vaccine, such as Johnson & Johnson’s Janssen vaccine;

Whereas it is necessary to update the Local Health Officer’s previous Directive on masking that went into effect on May 18, 2020;

Based upon all the above, the Local Health Officer hereby finds that:

Continued use of face masks for everyone 5-years of age and older within *indoor public* spaces is reasonable and necessary in King County to reduce the risk for CoV-19 transmission until CoV-19 disease rates decline, and more of the population is protected through vaccination.

EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY, as Local Health Officer I hereby **DIRECT as follows:**

INDOOR MASKING DIRECTIVE

Everyone 5-years of age and older in King County should continue to wear a face covering within *indoor public* spaces, unless a state-approved method is used to assure that all people allowed inside have been fully vaccinated.

Everyone in correctional facilities, homeless shelters, schools, public transportation, and certain health care settings, including doctor’s offices, long-term care, and hospitals must also wear a well-fitted mask

and adhere to guidance from the Washington State Department of Health.

This **DIRECTIVE** applies to **indoor** spaces that are open to the public, including retail, grocery stores, government buildings, and other businesses and places where members of the public can enter freely; it does not apply to indoor non-public spaces, including businesses, offices, and other places of employment with limited access. Employers should continue to follow current guidance and requirements from the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries on worker safety.

This **DIRECTIVE** also does not apply to outdoor places. Please follow current Washington State Department of Health guidance and directives on the use of masks outdoors.

I strongly recommend and urge all people in King County to voluntarily comply with this **DIRECTIVE**, and for all businesses that are open to the public, including grocery and other retail establishments, to continue implementing policies and practices to ensure that their customers and employees wear face masks.

This **DIRECTIVE** will remain in effect until Public Health – Seattle & King County confirms that 70% or more of adults age 16-years of age and older are fully vaccinated against CoV-19 with currently authorized vaccines.

Signed and ordered this 20th day of May 2021, in Seattle, Washington, by



Dr. Jeff Duchin
Local Health Officer
Public Health – Seattle & King County