



Published February 16th, 2022

Contra Costa County joins all other Bay Area counties in lifting mask mandate

By Sora O'Doherty

Vaccinated individuals over the age of 2 will no longer be required to wear masks in most indoor public settings as of Wednesday, Feb. 16, although masks continue to be strongly recommended. According to Supervisor Candace Andersen, "Businesses, venue operators, and hosts may determine their own paths forward to protect staff and patrons and may choose to require all patrons to wear masks." Unvaccinated individuals over age 2 will continue to be required to wear masks in all indoor public settings. The new rules apply in 11 Bay Area counties, including Contra Costa, Alameda, Napa, Solano, San Francisco, and the city of Berkeley.

Indoor masking is still required by the state for everyone, regardless of vaccination status, in public transportation; health care settings; congregate settings like correctional facilities and homeless shelters; long-term care facilities; and in K-12 schools and childcare settings.

The change adopted by the counties aligns with the California Department of Public Health's decision to let the statewide indoor mask requirement, in place since Dec. 15, expire.

Bay Area health officers continue to strongly recommend masks be used as an effective tool to prevent the spread of COVID-19, especially when case rates are high, or when additional personal protection is needed. Continuing to mask in indoor public settings, especially crowded or poorly ventilated spaces, remains the safest choice for an individual and protects those who are medically vulnerable or are not able to get vaccinated, including young children. As evidence continues to show, vaccinations and boosters remain the best defense against the virus.

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