



MEDICAL HEALTH OFFICER INDOOR MASKING DIRECTIVE

The Michigan Public Health Code Section 333.2433 requires and empowers the Local Health Officer or Medical Health Officer to take such action as is necessary to protect the public health and prevent disease. When necessary, the Health Officer must 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.

SARS-CoV-2 spreads from person to person primarily through inhalation of air carrying very small droplets and aerosol particles that contain infectious virus. The risk of transmission is greatest within three to six feet of an infectious person, but can also occur more than six feet away. Fully vaccinated people have a very high level of protection against COVID-19 compared to unvaccinated, and have a much lower chance of getting severely sick or dying. Until the Delta variant, fully vaccinated people who had a breakthrough case, did not have a high enough viral load to spread the infection to others. COVID-19 infections can spread from persons who are symptom-free and, with the Delta variant, infect others up to three days before symptoms appear.

The Delta variant is now confirmed in Genesee County and it is significantly more contagious than previous SARS-CoV-2 viruses. Relaxing of masking restrictions were based on evidence for earlier SARS-CoV-2 viruses. Case counts in Genesee County have been steadily increasing for the past month, with our risk level increasing from level "A" on July 1st, to level "C" on July 30th. [Michigan Safe Start Map Data](#) This increase is driven by the more contagious Delta variant, the discontinuation of indoor masking requirements at the state level, and a corresponding increase in activities and opportunities for SARS-CoV-2 transmission from person to person. The Medical Health Officer has determined that controls are necessary to reduce transmission of COVID-19 and to protect the public's health in Genesee County based on the following facts:

- Currently some 46.2% of Genesee County residents age 12 years and older are fully vaccinated against COVID-19, yet approximately 246,000 County residents remain unvaccinated. About 190,000 Genesee County residents are eligible for vaccination and are not vaccinated.
- There are about 56,000 Genesee County children less than 12 years old. These children are not currently eligible to be vaccinated and are at risk for infection.
- Additionally, tens of thousands of persons in Genesee County have underlying health problems. Those individuals are at increased risk of severe disease or death from COVID-19 due to the Delta variant compared with previously circulating SARS-CoV-2 lineages.
- The COVID-19 vaccine completion rate is significantly lower in younger age groups (24.4% in 12-19 years-old, 27.5% in 20-29 years-old; 35.1% in 30-44 years-old populations).
- The vast majority of COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths occur among unvaccinated persons. Vaccination affords excellent protection against serious COVID-19 infections, although a small proportion of vaccinated persons will still become infected and transmit the disease due to the Delta variant.

- When COVID-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.
- Face masks both reduce the emission of SARS-CoV-2 virus-laden droplets (“source control”) from infected persons as well as inhalation of these droplets by a wearer. Community masking is recommended by CDC to reduce the spread of SARS-CoV-2.
- When unvaccinated people gather indoors, especially without wearing masks, they are at risk both of getting COVID-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 that can increase the amount of virus in the air such as singing, shouting and aerobic exercise.
- In any public space, there is currently no practical way to know who is or is not vaccinated.

Based on the above and effective immediately, as Medical Health Officer I hereby **DIRECT as follows:**

Everyone while indoors in correctional facilities, homeless shelters, public transportation including school buses, and certain health care settings, including doctor’s offices, long-term care, and hospitals **MUST** wear a well-fitted mask and adhere to guidance from MDHHS per the CDC guidelines.

Effective immediately, everyone 5 years of age and older in Genesee County schools should wear a face covering within indoor spaces, unless a county-approved method is used to assure that all people allowed inside have been fully vaccinated. Children age two, three, or four years old, while exempt from this official directive, are also recommended to wear a face covering with the assistance and close supervision of an adult while indoors in a school or day care setting.

When the **transmission in Genesee County of COVID-19**, based on the number of cases per one million and case positivity rate using the [MI Start Map Risk Calculator](#), **meets the level of “Substantial Transmission” or “High Transmission” per CDC guidelines, then the use of face masks for everyone 5 years of age and older within indoor public spaces is reasonable and necessary to reduce the risk for COVID-19 transmission.** This directive will continue until Genesee County Health Department confirms that the COVID-19 risk to Genesee County residents is substantially reduced based on one or more of the following: COVID-19 disease rates are declining and stabilize to low or moderate levels of community transmission for at least two weeks in a row as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and per the [MI Start Map Risk Calculator](#) ; COVID-19 hospitalizations and death rates stabilize at low or moderate levels; or a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine is authorized by the US Food & Drug Administration (FDA) for use in children 5 years through 11 years of age.

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 MIOSHA for workplace safety guidelines.

I strongly recommend and urge all people in Genesee County to voluntarily comply with this DIRECTIVE. We know that combining masks and vaccines will protect ourselves and our community against this fast-changing virus. If our level of cases increases to “substantial” or “high,” I likewise

urge 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, in order to protect the health of their customers and workers.

This **DIRECTIVE** will remain in effect until the Genesee County Health Department confirms that COVID-19 disease rates have declined to sustained low levels of transmission as defined by the CDC or is otherwise rescinded.

Signed and ordered this 3rd day of August, 2021, by

Dr. Pamela B. Hackert
Medical Health Officer
Genesee County Health Department