



Mask FAQ *(Updated 04-03-2023)*

As of April 3, 2023, the Oregon Health Authority does not have masking requirements for any settings.

Below are answers to frequently asked questions (FAQ) about the Oregon Administrative Rules (OAR) related to the wearing of masks to protect against the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses and include general recommendations on mask wearing. OAR [333-019-1011](#), Masking Requirements to Control COVID-19 in Health Care Settings; OAR [333-019-1015](#), Masking Requirements in Schools and OAR [333-019-1025](#), Mask Requirements for Indoor Spaces are currently rescinded and no longer in effect. Visit OHA's [mask safety webpage](#) for more information and to view the orders rescinding the rules. These FAQ may be updated intermittently.

Q: Was the mask requirement in health care settings lifted on April 3, 2023?

Yes, the Oregon Health Authority requirement to wear masks in health care settings was lifted on April 3. Health care settings may still require masks for providers, staff, patients, and visitors. Health care providers may be required to wear masks in compliance with federal laws. Providers and staff should check with their employers to understand any applicable requirements for wearing a mask.

Q: Why did OHA lift the mask requirement in health care settings? Did OHA consider concerns of people at higher risk of severe COVID-19 disease?

The decision to rescind the state mask requirement for workers, patients and visitors in health care settings, effective April 3, was made in collaboration with subject matter experts and based on the extent of current disease transmission in the state, which is low enough to allow masks to no longer be required in health care settings. We trust our health care settings to follow appropriate infection prevention and control guidance and align with state and federal masking requirements when they apply.

Wearing a mask remains an effective way to reduce transmission of respiratory viruses. OHA encourages individuals to wear a mask in any setting, including health care settings if they are sick, are at increased risk for severe illness (or live with someone at high risk), or at any time wearing a mask makes them feel more comfortable.

Q: When did OHA lift the mask requirements in schools and in indoor public spaces?

OHA lifted mask requirements in schools and in indoor public spaces on March 12, 2022. People may continue to wear masks in public settings and in workplaces. Health officials also strongly recommend people who are at high risk for severe disease, or who are caregivers for or live with someone who is at high risk for severe disease continue to wear masks in public places, especially in communities experiencing high levels of transmission.

Q: When making the decision to lift state mask requirements, did OHA look only generally at cases and hospitalizations or did OHA consider the burden of COVID-19 and inequitable health outcomes for vulnerable communities and communities of color?

OHA took into account several factors when making the decision to lift the health care setting mask requirement. Under the administrative rule 333-019-1011, which requires wearing masks health care settings, Oregon's State Health Officer and Public Health Director must, and did, take into account at least the following information:

- The degree of COVID-19 transmission, as measured by case rates, percent positivity, and any other objective metrics indicative of current or potential transmission in Oregon.
- COVID-19-related hospitalizations and deaths.
- Disparate COVID-19-related health impacts on communities of color and tribal communities.
- Guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Proportion of the population partially or fully vaccinated.

OHA understands the disproportionate impacts COVID-19 has had on communities of color, tribal communities, people with disabilities and older Oregonians, and that these inequities stem from systemic racism and structural inequities that have long existed in the state. OHA is committed to continuing to partner with communities to respond to public health concerns like COVID-19 and to provide resources and care for those most impacted.

Q: Can businesses and workplaces, including health care settings continue to require masks?

Yes. Businesses and organizations may implement policies to protect workers, customers, visitors and clients, including requiring masks and proof of vaccination, in compliance with Americans with Disability Act guidelines and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. Many businesses and employers may choose to have these policies once the state mask requirement is lifted. For organizations and businesses that choose to require masks and/or proof of vaccination, OHA recommends the following:

- A clear, written policy that is available to staff and visitors
- Staff training on the policy and how to educate visitors on the policy
- Clear, visible signs at entrances and throughout the facility
- Extra masks to provide to staff and visitors who do not have one
- A clear, written protocol to respond to complaints
- OHA has provided signs at [this website](#) in the “signage” section.

Q: Can I still wear a mask even if my health care provider does not require it?

Yes. Individuals may wear a mask in a health care setting even if it is not required by the provider.

Q: I am immunocompromised and at increased risk of severe COVID-19 disease. How can I protect myself in health care settings if people around me are not wearing masks?

OHA encourages you to talk with your health care provider. Some health care settings may continue to require that people wear masks after the state requirement ends. OHA also encourages all individuals at increased risk for severe illness to remain up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations. OHA encourages individuals to wear a mask in any setting, including health care settings if they are sick, are at increased risk for severe illness (or live with someone at high risk), or at any time wearing a mask makes them feel more comfortable.

Safe and Strong can provide you with access to mental and emotional support during this time of transition. Assessing your risk and talking to a health care provider can help you make effective decisions about how to protect yourself.

<https://www.safestrongoregon.org>.

Q: If I live with an elderly or an immunocompromised person, should I wear a mask when I am around that person?

Individuals over the age of 65, individuals with underlying medical conditions and immunocompromised individuals are at increased risk of severe COVID-19 disease. Wearing a well-fitting mask helps reduce the transmission of COVID-19. OHA encourages individuals to wear a mask in any setting, including health care settings if they are sick, are at increased risk for severe illness (or live with someone at high risk), or at any time wearing a mask makes them feel more comfortable.

Taking these measures is particularly important if you live in a medium or high transmission area. OHA recommends individuals visit [OHA's COVID-19 website](#) to review current COVID-19 data and information.

Q: Was the mask requirement lifted in health care settings that are licensed by the Oregon Department of Human Services?

Health care settings that are licensed by ODHS should consult with that agency to determine whether masks are still required.

Q: Where can I see the orders that lifted the mask requirements?

The orders that lifted the indoor mask requirement, the school mask requirement and the health care mask requirement are on OHA's [masks website](#).

Q: Does OHA's announcement the health care mask requirement mean the pandemic is over?

No, the pandemic is not over. However, the public emergency phase of the pandemic is ending, and we are observing less severe COVID-19 disease as our population gains immunity through vaccinations and infection.

OHA is committed to continuing to partner with communities to respond to public health concerns like COVID-19 and to provide resources and care for those most impacted. [Safe and Strong](#) can provide you with access to various resources for you and your community during this time of transition.

Q: My organization continues to require masks. what can I do if someone comes into my organization and refuses to wear a mask?

Employers and businesses must comply with the Americans with Disability Act guidelines and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. If a person with a disability cannot wear a mask where one is required, a place of public accommodation, such as a business or space open to the public, will need to work with that person to provide a reasonable accommodation. Some common reasonable accommodations are:

- free curbside pick-up
- free delivery or
- an appointment by phone or video

An employer is not required to allow a customer, client or visitor inside without a mask if one is required.

OHA does not recommend that employers and businesses ask individuals with disabilities for proof of their disability. If an individual says they have a disability and as a result cannot wear a mask, the employer or business should consider what reasonable modifications they can make to allow the individual access to services.

If an individual does not have a mask, the employer or business could offer the individual a mask for use while on the premises. If an individual does not have a disability and refuses to wear a mask where required, the employer or business may refuse service to the individual.

Q: Am I allowed to still wear a mask in indoor public places?

Yes. Anyone who wants to continue to wear a mask can do so, including in public places and in workplaces. In addition, some organizations and businesses may require individuals to wear masks.

Q: I want to continue wearing a mask in public places even though the requirement is lifted. What is the best mask for me to wear?

The best mask is the most protective one that you can wear correctly and consistently. A mask that fits snugly and well on your face ensures that there are no gaps to allow respiratory droplets to enter or exit the mask. In addition, a mask with more than one layer is better than a one-layer mask. While all masks and respirators provide some level of protection, properly fitting respirators, like N95 and KN95 masks, provide the highest level of protection. These types of high-level respirators may only be necessary, however, in high-risk settings or for people who are at increased risk of severe COVID-19 disease. The CDC has more information here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>.

Q: What can I do if someone harasses me for continuing to wear a mask?

OHA supports all individuals that choose to wear a face covering. Individuals should respect the choices of others to wear masks. There are different reasons why someone may wear a face covering. Some reasons include that a person may have a disability or medical condition that puts them at high risk for severe COVID-19 illness.

People of color may experience harassment, bias, exclusion or other negative reactions or effects when wearing masks or face coverings. This may be because of racial bias, stereotyping or discrimination. Oregon law does not allow discrimination or hate or bias crimes. A hate or bias crime is a criminal act, including offensive physical contact, assault, property damage or threats, that may be motivated by another person's perceived:

- Race,
- Color,
- Disability,
- Religion,
- National origin,
- Sexual orientation, or
- Gender identity.

Bias incidents are any hostile expression toward another person, including hate language, mocking, mimicking, exclusion, or discriminatory refusal of service, relating to the other person's perceived protected class (listed above).

A person who believes they experienced a hate or bias crime or incident because of wearing of a mask, face covering or face shield or not wearing a mask, face covering or face shield in public has resources available to help them. To report a bias crime, call law enforcement at 911. To report a bias incident, call the Oregon Department of Justice at 1-844-924-BIAS (2427). Dial 711 for Oregon Relay. For more information, go to [StandAgainstHate.Oregon.gov](https://standagainsthate.oregon.gov). To file a civil rights complaint, visit Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) [website](#) or call 971-673-0764.

Q: What tips does OHA have to help partners communicate with their communities about OHA's decision to lift mask requirements?

Oregonians may be interested in contacting those who make decisions for their communities. Some types of decision-makers in Oregon are:

- Governor
- State Senator
- State Representative
- City Councilor
- County Commissioner
- School Board Member

To contact the Oregon Governor's Office visit <https://www.oregon.gov/gov/pages/contact-us.aspx>.

To contact state legislators, Oregonians can find their representative and senator at [this website](#).

Another way to locate decision-makers is to use an internet search to find city council or school board members or county commissioners.

Q: My community-based organization provides services that some individuals need. Can I still require masks for all individuals?

While you may be able to require your staff to wear a mask and require masks for those coming into your facility for services, if you are going out into the community to provide services, you may not be able to require individuals you serve to wear a mask, unless you have a service agreement with them that states they have to wear a mask when receiving services.

Q: Do parents have the option of having their kids wear a mask in school even though OHA does not require masks in schools anymore?

Yes. Students, faculty and staff may still choose to continue to wear a mask while in these settings. Some school districts may continue to require students, faculty and staff to wear masks in K-12 settings. Parents should check with their school district to understand whether masks are required in their schools.

Q: If my county has a school, health care or indoor space mask requirement but the state does not, do I have to follow the county's requirements?

Yes. Individuals are required to comply with local policies that continue to require masks. These policies could be implemented by city and county governments, school boards and other local decision-making authorities.

Q: What barriers may people with disabilities experience when other people wear masks, face coverings or face shields?

Barriers people with disabilities may experience are:

- Some people need to see mouth movements or facial expressions to know what you are saying.
- Some people with developmental disabilities or differences can misread or misinterpret facial expressions. A person may have trouble with understanding emotion from tone of voice alone. If you're wearing a mask, they may get cues only from your eyes or eyebrows, which could lead to a negative interpretation or misunderstanding of the emotion or intent of the speaker.
- Some people who are hard of hearing read lips. Mouth movements and facial expressions can communicate a lot of information and masks that are not clear prevent people from seeing the speaker's mouth.
- Sign language uses the mouth to communicate certain words and meanings. When a face covering blocks a person's mouth, it makes it hard for people using sign language to communicate.

Employers and places of public accommodations must work with persons with a disability to arrange a reasonable accommodation that will permit an employee to do their job or allow a patron to access services. Those denied a reasonable accommodation should contact Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) [Civil Rights Division](#) at 971-673-0764 or crdemail@boli.state.or.us.

Q: Since masks are no longer required, are there other ways I can protect my workers and members of the public when they are in my business?

There are other ways for businesses and organizations to continue to protect employees and members of the public:

- Require COVID-19 vaccination for employees if permitted by law.
 - Vaccination against COVID-19 continues to be the most effective way to prevent serious illness and hospitalization resulting from COVID-19 infection.
- Require proof of vaccination for visitors and customers, especially for indoor settings.

- Continue to require masks for employees and members of the public to enter the premises.
- Increase ventilation in indoor spaces, including opening windows where possible as long as doing so does not present a danger to employees or visitors.
 - OHA recommends reviewing [COVID-19 Public Health Recommendations: Indoor air considerations for smaller spaces](#) for information about improving indoor air quality.
- Where possible, provide options for employees and customers to be outside. This can include providing outdoor seating areas and moving meetings outdoors, as long as it does not present a danger to employees or visitors.
- Increase the distance between individuals, including employees and visitors.

Document accessibility: You can get this document in other languages, large print, braille or a format you prefer. Contact Acute and Communicable Disease Prevention at 971-673-1111 or email ohd.acdp@state.or.us. OHA accepts all relay calls, or you can dial 711.