

# Gov. Edwards Lifts Louisiana's Mask Mandate Statewide, Except for K-12 Schools

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**JOHN BEL EDWARDS**



**OFFICE *of the* GOVERNOR**

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Today, Gov. John Bel Edwards announced he will lift Louisiana's statewide mask mandate in all settings except for K-12 schools, after sustained improvement across the state in terms of new cases, test positivity and hospitalizations. The Governor's updated order allows school districts to opt out of the mask mandate as long as they continue to follow the existing quarantine guidelines recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to better separate exposed students and faculty members from others and avoid outbreaks on campus.

CDC guidance still says everyone 2 years of age or older who is not fully vaccinated should wear a mask in indoor public places. And if you are fully vaccinated, to maximize protection from the Delta variant, wear a mask indoors in public if you are in an area with high transmission. People who have a health condition or are taking medications that weaken their immune system may not be fully protected even if they are fully vaccinated. They should continue to take all precautions recommended for unvaccinated people, including

wearing a well-fitted mask, until advised otherwise by their healthcare provider. At this time, in light of the Delta variant, CDC recommends universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status.

“Today, I am cautiously optimistic and very relieved that the worst of this fourth surge of COVID is clearly behind us, which is a direct result of the people of Louisiana who stepped up to the plate when we needed them to and put their masks back on, got vaccinated, and took extra precautions to stay safe. That’s why we are able to lift the statewide mask mandate,” said Gov. Edwards. “While the K-12 mask mandate will be in place, school districts can opt out if they follow the existing, evidence-based CDC quarantine guidance. This new order does offer a way for local leaders to end the school mask mandate, if they so choose. Let me be clear – Louisiana has been a leader in bringing students safely back into the classroom. And they have done that by following public health guidance including on masking and quarantine. Public health experts and I encourage schools to stay that course. But because case numbers are going down and have reached a new baseline I do believe it’s an appropriate time to give schools more autonomy. It’s not lost on me that while Louisiana has seen 18 children die of COVID, half of those deaths came in the last three months, as the much more contagious Delta variant surged throughout our state.”

Masks will still be mandated by federal regulation, including on mass transit and in health care facilities. They will not be mandated in most places, including government buildings, college and university campuses and businesses. School districts may opt out of the mask mandate if they choose to, but only if they continue to adhere to CDC quarantine guidance.

“We are encouraged about our current COVID trends, but remain mindful of our profound loss as a result of the last surge and cognizant that we will remain vulnerable to an equally damaging surge unless more of our friends, family and neighbors choose to get vaccinated,” said State Health Officer Dr. Joseph Kanter.

Local governments and private businesses may choose to continue to require and enforce mask requirements under the Governor’s order, which goes into effect on Wednesday, October 27.

Click [here](#) to read the executive order.

Click [here](#) to view gating criteria slides.

## **SCHOOL AND GENERAL QUARANTINE GUIDANCE**

Under the CDC and LDH guidance that schools without mask mandates must follow, asymptomatic individuals who may have been in close contact (within 6 feet of someone infected with COVID-19 for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period) to someone infected with COVID-19 should quarantine.

Under the following criteria quarantine is not necessary:

- Individuals who are fully vaccinated at the time of exposure and remain asymptomatic
- Individuals who previously tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 90 days and remain asymptomatic
- If both the positive case and the contact were masked AND were  $\geq 3$  feet of each other and remain asymptomatic (only applies to students in structured K-12 settings)

Duration: The standard length is 14 days; however, schools can choose to use shortened quarantine options.

Options to shorten quarantine include:

- If no symptoms develop during quarantine AND they have a negative antigen or PCR/molecular test collected on day 5, 6, or 7 after last exposure: they may quarantine for 7 days from last contact with a COVID-19 case OR
- If no symptoms develop during quarantine and no testing is done: they may quarantine for 10 days from last contact with a COVID-19 case

At this time, the CDC advises that fully vaccinated individuals who are not experiencing COVID symptoms do not need to quarantine following an exposure to COVID-19, and LDH is not yet altering this guidance.

Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19, even those who are fully vaccinated or without a known exposure, should get tested.

Anyone who tests positive should immediately isolate. Isolation (for those who test positive for COVID-19) typically consists of:

- If symptomatic, at least 10 days since symptoms first appeared, symptoms are improving, and at least 24 hours with no fever without fever-reducing medication
- If asymptomatic but with a positive test, 10 days from the time the test sample was collected

Call 211 to find a COVID-19 testing site near you.

## **HOW TO GET A COVID VACCINE IN LOUISIANA**

Everyone aged 12 and older is eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine in Louisiana. The FDA has only authorized one of the three COVID-19 vaccines – from Pfizer – for children ages 12 to 17. Parents should confirm with the vaccine provider that their child is under 18 to ensure Pfizer vaccine is available before making an appointment.

- COVID-19 vaccines are widely available at more than 1,000 locations in all of Louisiana's 64 parishes, including at pharmacies, hospitals, health care clinics, and doctor's offices.

- For a list of locations, visit LDH's vaccine directory or visit [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov), which is maintained by the federal government.
- To get a list of vaccine locations near you text your ZIP code to GETVAX (438829) in English, or VACUNA (822862) in Spanish.
- If you have questions, would like to speak with a medical professional, or need help scheduling an appointment, call 211 or Louisiana's vaccine hotline at 1-855-453-0774.