

Following New CDC Guidance on Face Coverings, Governor Cooper Lifts Many COVID-19 Restrictions

State to lift gathering limits, social distancing requirements in all settings and indoor mask mandate for most settings

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Today, Governor Roy Cooper and North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Mandy K. Cohen, M.D. shared an update on the state's COVID-19 progress. Throughout the pandemic, state officials have taken a data-driven approach and have been guided by the science in making decisions. Following yesterday's guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that fully vaccinated individuals can safely do most activities without wearing a mask or the need to social distance from others, the state will remove its indoor mask mandate for most settings. Additionally, the state will lift all mass gathering limits and social distancing requirements. These changes are now in effect as of 1:30 PM today.

"We can take this step today because the science shows our focus on getting people vaccinated is working," said Governor Cooper. "But to keep moving forward – and to make sure that we keep saving lives – more people need to get vaccinated."

The ability to lift restrictions sooner than anticipated following the CDC's guidance shows the importance of vaccinating all North Carolinians. As of this week, even more people can get vaccinated. Younger teens between 12 and 15 can now get the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. Young people are vulnerable to the COVID-19 virus, just like everyone else, and the percent of COVID-19 cases in North Carolina children 17 and under has been increasing.

North Carolina continues to focus on distributing vaccines quickly and equitably. To date, the state has administered over 7.7 million doses. 51% percent of those 18 and up are at least partially vaccinated, and 46% percent of those 18 and up have been fully vaccinated.

"I am so proud of the incredible progress we have made in beating back this pandemic," said Secretary Mandy K. Cohen, M.D. "Vaccines continue to be incredibly effective at protecting individuals from this terrible virus. And as more and more people get vaccinated, the results show in our stable metrics with lower cases, lower hospitalizations, and lower deaths."

In accordance with the new CDC guidance, there will still be certain settings where masks and other safety measures will be required. Masks will still be required in child care, schools and

campus as most children are either not yet vaccinated or are not yet eligible to be vaccinated. Everyone, including people who are fully vaccinated will still be required to wear a mask in certain settings such as public transportation, health care settings like hospitals, doctor's offices and long-term care settings like nursing homes, and certain congregate settings like correctional facilities and homeless shelters.

NCDHHS will continue to have strong public health recommendations for individuals to continue to protect one another until more people are vaccinated. People who are not vaccinated should wear a mask and maintain distance in all indoor public settings and in outdoor settings when they can't maintain six feet of distance.

Masks are strongly recommended for everyone at large crowded indoor events like sporting events and live performances.

NCDHHS recommends public facing businesses post signage reminding guests to social distance and wear a face covering if they are not fully vaccinated; remind employees to self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19; have a plan to immediately isolate and remove sick workers; and clean high-touch surfaces once a day. Businesses may choose to continue to require that their customers wear masks.

The Department of Health and Human Services will also continue to expand strategies to reach people who have not yet gotten vaccinated.

Information on the state's vaccine distribution is available at YourSpotYourShot.nc.gov (English) or Vacunate.nc.gov (Spanish). People can find nearby vaccine providers using NCDHHS' online tool, [Find a Vaccine Location](#). The state's COVID-19 vaccine hotline number is 888-675-4567.