

PRESS RELEASE

OC Health Care Agency Supports CDPH COVID-19 Recommendations and School Mask Policy

Statements from California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

On August 24, the CDPH issued a [statement](#) in support of the CDC's interim public health recommendations for fully vaccinated individuals. According to their statement, fully vaccinated people:

- Can resume activities that they did prior to the pandemic.
- Must follow mandatory provisions in CDPH's Face Coverings Guidance.
- Should consider wearing a mask in indoor public and non-public settings, particularly if they are immunocompromised or at increased risk for severe disease from COVID-19, or if they have someone in their household who is immunocompromised, at increased risk of severe disease, not fully vaccinated, or not yet eligible for vaccination.
- If asymptomatic, can refrain from quarantine following a known exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19. Fully vaccinated persons are recommended to be tested 3-5 days after exposure and wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days.

“We are finally beginning to see a slight drop in our cases and hospitalizations, but until more people are vaccinated, prevention measures will continue to be necessary for everyone, regardless of your vaccination status,” says **Dr. Clayton Chau**, OC Health Care Agency Director (HCA) and County Health Officer. “I want to re-emphasize the importance of wearing a mask indoors. Face masks are an extra precautionary measure that helps to reduce the spread of COVID-19. I encourage you to please wear a mask indoors, even in small groups. It not only protects you but also those around you who may be immunocompromised, at risk of severe disease, not fully vaccinated or not yet eligible for the vaccine.”

On August 23, the CDPH issued a [statement](#) to school leaders emphasizing the requirement for mandatory universal masking indoors in K-12 settings—both public schools and private schools—with limited exemptions as specified in their general Guidance for the Use of Face Coverings. According to their statement, universal masking reduces the risk of outbreaks, thereby avoiding disruptions to school operations, including closure. Furthermore, masks empower schools to implement more targeted quarantine procedures, often eliminating the need for students to miss any instructional time.

“There is currently misinformation out there about the health risks for children who wear masks,” says Dr. Chau. “Please know that there’s no scientific evidence of CO2 poisoning, nor masks having an adverse mental health impact on children; on the contrary, masks are known to prevent illness, school absences and even death. Universal masking is intended to safeguard the health and safety of students, school staff, and their families.”

To address another area of concern, on August 26, the CDC issued a [health advisory](#) against the use of a prescription medication called ivermectin, used to treat certain infections caused by internal and external parasites, for prevention or treatment of COVID-19. In January 2021, poison control centers across the U.S. received a three-fold increase in the number of calls for human exposures to ivermectin compared to the pre-pandemic baseline.

In July 2021, ivermectin calls have continued to sharply increase, to a five-fold increase from the baseline. These reports are also associated with increased frequency of adverse effects and emergency department and hospital visits. The public are advised:

- Be aware that currently ivermectin has not been proven as a way to prevent or treat COVID-19.
- Do not swallow ivermectin products that should be used on skin (e.g., lotions and creams) or are not meant for human use, such as veterinary ivermectin products.
- Seek immediate medical attention or call the poison control center hotline (1-800-222-1222) for advice if you have taken ivermectin or a product that contains ivermectin and are having symptoms. Signs and symptoms include gastrointestinal effects (nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, and diarrhea), headache, blurred vision, dizziness, fast heart rate, and low blood pressure. Other severe nervous system effects have been reported, including tremors, seizures, hallucinations, confusion, loss of coordination and balance, decreased alertness, and coma.

COVID-19 Status in Orange County

Orange County has begun to see a slight decrease in COVID-19 case figures. Between August 18 and August 25, the seven-day average case rate dropped from 22.5 to 20.4 per 100,000 people, with the average number of daily COVID-19 cases declining from 727 to 657. The positivity rate also decreased slightly from 8 to 7.8 percent, hospitalizations decreased from 571 to 565 per day, and ICU admissions from 133 to 117 per day. Orange County COVID-19 case counts, and testing figures are updated daily, Monday through Friday, at <https://occovid19.ochealthinfo.com/coronavirus-in-oc>.

“I cannot emphasize enough that vaccinations are the safest and most effective way to fight COVID-19, in combination with our other preventative measures including wearing masks,” says Dr. Chau. “I continue to urge our residents who are not yet vaccinated to consider scheduling their appointment for a vaccine by visiting www.Othena.com or calling the OC COVID-19 Hotline at (714) 834-2000.”

For more information and resources on the COVID-19 vaccine in Orange County, visit www.covidvaccinefacts.com.

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