



GUIDANCE FOR VACCINATED AND UNVACCINATED INDIVIDUALS

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The following is guidance for all vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals.

Over the course of the pandemic, the Texas Department of State Health Services is regularly monitoring new data as it comes in and reviewing the science to inform our guidance and decision making. Based on the latest science, we can say that anyone who is fully vaccinated can resume activities. The science is clear: if you are fully vaccinated, you are protected.

- Cases have continued falling dramatically, and a growing number of studies have shown three big things:
 - Vaccines are working in the real world. Studies show them to be more than 90% effective in the real-world settings in preventing mild and severe disease, hospitalization, and death.
 - Vaccines have proven to be effective against the SARS-CoV-2 variants currently circulating in the country.
 - If you're vaccinated, you're less likely to spread the virus. A growing body of evidence suggests that fully vaccinated people are less likely to have asymptomatic infection and to be able to transmit SARS-CoV-2 to others.
- Since May 12, 2021, anyone 12 years and older has been eligible for vaccination.
- We have a strong supply of vaccine. Anyone who wants to get a vaccine can get it.
 - Getting a COVID-19 vaccine is faster and more convenient than ever.
 - About nine out of 10 Americans live within 5 miles of a COVID-19 vaccination site and many forms of private and public assistance are available to ensure access.
 - To find the site closest to you, visit our website at dshs.texas.gov; or call 833-832-7067 if you don't have internet service or need help signing up. Spanish language and other translators are available to help callers.
- **Why now? What changed?**

CDC guidance is based on the available science. Cases have continued falling dramatically, and a growing number of studies have shown three big things:

 1. Vaccines are working in the real world. Studies show them to be more than 90% effective in the real-world settings in preventing mild and severe disease, hospitalization, and death.
 2. Vaccines have proven to be effective against the SARS-CoV-2 variants currently circulating in the country.
 3. If you're vaccinated, you're less likely to spread the virus. A growing body of evidence suggests that fully vaccinated people are less likely to have asymptomatic infection and to be able to transmit SARS-CoV-2 to others.

Taken together, this science is encouraging and shows that vaccinated people are protected and less likely to carry the virus to others. So, with all this evidence in mind, we are recommending that vaccinated people no longer need to wear a mask.



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- **How will people know if someone is vaccinated?**

You may not know if someone around you is vaccinated, which is why we are encouraging everyone to get vaccinated – because we know the benefits: it protects you, it protects others, and it lets us return to normal. So, we hope everyone takes advantage of this important tool to stay safe and end the pandemic. Vaccination is safe, available, and free.

Vaccination data coverage by county is available on our website under the [Vaccine Data](#) tab.

- **What does it mean to be “fully vaccinated”?**

In general, people are considered fully vaccinated:

- 2 weeks after their second dose in a 2-dose series, such as the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or
- 2 weeks after a single-dose vaccine, such as Johnson & Johnson’s Janssen vaccine

If you don’t meet these requirements, regardless of your age, you are NOT fully vaccinated. Keep taking all [precautions](#) until you are fully vaccinated.

If you have a condition or are taking medications that weaken your immune system, you may NOT be fully protected even if you are fully vaccinated. Talk to your healthcare provider. Even after vaccination, you may need to continue taking all [precautions](#).

- **Does everyone who wants a vaccine really have access to a vaccine?**

As of May 12, 2021, anyone age 12 years of age older are eligible for vaccination.

About nine out of 10 Americans live within 5 miles of a COVID-19 vaccination site. Two popular ride-sharing services will offer free rides to vaccination appointments until July 4, 2021. To find a vaccination site closest to you, visit dshs.texas.gov or vaccines.gov; text your ZIP code to 438829 (GETVAX); or call 800-232-0233.

- **But shouldn’t we keep masks to protect against variants?**

The vaccines we have available are effective against the variants that are circulating in the US.

- **What if there is a surge or if other variants emerge? Will we need masks then?**

The past year has shown us that this virus can be unpredictable, so if things get worse, there is always a chance we may need to make changes to the recommendations. But we know that the more people are vaccinated, the less cases we will have and the less chance of a new spike or additional variants emerging.

- **Are there any people who are fully vaccinated who should still wear a mask?**

If you have a condition or are taking medications that weaken your immune system, increasing data suggest you may not be fully protected even if you are fully vaccinated. Talk to your healthcare provider. Even after vaccination, you may need to continue taking all [precautions](#).



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- **Does this guidance apply to all settings?**

This guidance does not apply to healthcare settings (e.g., hospitals, long-term care, doctors' offices). Guidance for residents and staff of healthcare settings can be found in the [Infection Control after Vaccination](#) section of the CDC website. CDC is updating guidance for other settings.

- **What can you do if you have been fully vaccinated?**

You can resume activities that you did prior to the pandemic without wearing a mask or staying 6 feet apart from others.

- **Everyone 12 years old and older became eligible on May 12, 2021. Not everyone has had a chance to become vaccinated yet, including in vulnerable communities.**

If you're not fully vaccinated, you may choose to continue to wear a face covering to protect yourself and others who have not yet been vaccinated. But the science shows us that fully vaccinated people are protected. So, we encourage everyone to get vaccinated as soon as possible. Vaccines are available.

- **Why don't people need to distance?**

The science shows that, if you're fully vaccinated, you are protected and are far less likely to spread the virus to others, so we are lifting recommendations for distancing at this time for fully vaccinated people.

- **Since there is no way to prove vaccination status, do you think this will lead to unvaccinated people ditching their masks and returning to public places, too?**

We encourage everyone to get vaccinated – it is the best way to protect yourself and others and allow you to return safely to normal. If you are vaccinated, you are protected from those who may not be. But if you're unvaccinated and choose not to wear a mask, you are putting yourself at risk. At this time, we encourage anyone who is unvaccinated to continue masking to protect themselves and others who may not have had a chance to be vaccinated yet.