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ADVISORY REGARDING FACE COVERINGS AND CLOTH MASKS

Updated July 30, 2021

This Advisory has been updated as of July 30, 2021.

On July 27, 2021, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued updated guidance regarding the use of face coverings and cloth masks by individuals who are fully vaccinated for COVID-19. COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective and every individual who is eligible and either works, studies or resides in Massachusetts is advised to get vaccinated.

The updated CDC guidance continues to state that individuals who are fully vaccinated may, as a general matter, resume many of the activities that they engaged in prior to the pandemic without wearing a mask or staying 6 feet apart, except where otherwise required by federal, state, or local laws, rules or regulations. In response to the recent spread of the Delta variant, however, the CDC's updated guidance does recommend that even fully vaccinated persons wear masks or face coverings when indoors if other risk factors are present.

In light of the information provided by the CDC, and in order to maximize protection of vulnerable individuals from the Delta variant, the Department of Public Health now advises that a fully vaccinated person should wear a mask or face covering when indoors (and not in your own home) if you have a weakened immune system, or if you are at increased risk for severe disease because of your age or an underlying medical condition, or if someone in your household has a weakened immune system, is at increased risk for severe disease, or is an unvaccinated adult.

Your primary care provider can advise you whether you are at increased risk. Information from the CDC on the conditions that may put you at increased risk can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html>.

An individual is fully vaccinated two weeks after their second dose in a two-dose series, such as the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or two weeks after a single-dose vaccine, such as Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine. However, if a fully vaccinated individual becomes symptomatic, they should be tested and wear a mask until receiving test results.

All people in Massachusetts (regardless of vaccination status) are required to continue wearing face coverings in certain settings, including transportation and health care facilities. Please see www.mass.gov/maskrules for a complete list of venues where face coverings remain mandatory as of May 29, 2021.

For individuals who are not fully vaccinated, it is important that you continue to wear a face covering or mask to help prevent you from spreading COVID-19 to other people. People who show no symptoms of illness may still be able to spread COVID-19.

For individuals who are not fully vaccinated, the CDC advises the following:

- Wear a face covering or mask that covers your nose and mouth.
- Stay 6 feet apart from others who don't live with you.
- Avoid crowds and poorly ventilated indoor spaces.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. Use hand sanitizer if soap and water aren't available
- Get tested if you have been exposed to or have symptoms associated with COVID-19.

When you wear a face covering or cloth mask, it should:

- Fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face,
- Be secured with ties or ear loops,
- Include multiple layers of fabric,
- Allow for breathing without restriction, and
- Be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape.

For more information, please refer to the CDC at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html>

This advisory may change based on public health data and further guidance from the CDC.