

K-12 Face Covering Rule



Priority for in-person learning

Students learn best when they are able to attend school in-person. Oregon is placing a priority on ensuring that every student in Oregon is able to attend school in-person for the entire school year. Students are required to attend school, which is a congregate setting where COVID-19 can spread easily if precautions are not taken. Universal and correct use of face coverings keeps kids learning in-person. The Oregon Department of Education (ODE), the Oregon Health Authority (OHA), the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) all agree that returning to full-time, in-person learning is best for our children.

Current information on disease transmission in Oregon

In response to a steep rise in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations in Oregon, as well as new national guidance calling for masking measures to prevent the spread of the highly transmissible Delta variant, ODE and OHA agree with Governor Brown on the need for an immediate shift to universal face coverings in K-12 settings. The Delta variant has increased rapidly in recent weeks and is now estimated to account for more than 80% of new cases in Oregon. Use of face masks provides significant protection for individuals who are unvaccinated as well as an additional level of protection from the small risk of infection for fully vaccinated individuals.

Keeping our students learning in-person

OHA and the CDC have updated guidelines for responding to COVID-19 cases in schools to prioritize in-person learning. What this means, bottom line, is that when schools have layered mitigation measures in place – including universal and correct use of face coverings – fewer kids will spend time out of school under quarantine, or out sick with COVID-19.

Universal masking for K-12 settings, regardless of vaccination status

Two of the most important tools the state has to control COVID-19 are vaccination and face coverings. However, currently children under the age of 12 are not eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccines authorized for emergency use. In order to protect students under age 12, individuals who are not vaccinated, and those with underlying health conditions that make them more susceptible to complications from COVID-19, as well as to minimize the disruption of student education in schools because of exposure to a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19, requiring universal use of face coverings inside schools is the best choice for Oregon.

Though COVID-19 outbreaks have occurred in school settings, multiple studies have shown that transmission rates within school settings, when multiple prevention strategies are in place, are typically lower than – or similar to – community transmission levels. CDC's science brief on [Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in K-12 Schools and Early Care and Education Programs](#) summarizes evidence on COVID-19 among children and adolescents and what is known about preventing transmission in schools and Early Care and Education programs.