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**CDPH COVID-19 Update:
Chicago and Cook County Hold at Medium COVID Community Level**

CDPH strongly recommends masking in public indoor spaces

CHICAGO – Chicago and suburban Cook County remain at a [Medium COVID Community Level](#), even as case rates continue to increase throughout the Midwest and Northeast United States, the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) announced today. Nearly a quarter of the U.S. is now at a Medium or High COVID Community Level, and eight Illinois counties are at a High Level.

“While we remain in Medium, I expect that we will reach a High Level as soon as next week given ongoing COVID trends,” said CDPH Commissioner Allison Arwady, M.D. “Even if Cook County moves to High, as long as the healthcare system in Chicago remains stable we likely will not automatically reinstate a mask mandate. We may, however, advise high-risk people to consider limiting non-essential indoor gatherings.”

CDPH continues to strongly urge masking in all public indoor spaces in Chicago—including on public transit—with the rising number of cases. Chicagoans should also ensure that they and everyone in their social networks are up-to-date with COVID-19 vaccines and boosters; test when they experience COVID-19 symptoms; and continue to follow all isolation and quarantine requirements. Chicagoans with underlying conditions or who are older should also seek early treatment if they are diagnosed with COVID-19, to decrease the risk of hospitalization.

Federal health officials on Thursday formally recommended that eligible 5-to-11-year-olds also receive a booster dose.

“We’ve been waiting for this, and I strongly encourage all parents to get a booster dose for their younger children--and use the opportunity to get the whole family up-to-date with vaccines and boosters,” said Dr. Arwady. “Unless you got your very first COVID-19 vaccines in 2022, if you’ve only had your original two vaccine doses, you should get a booster now. Vaccination including boosters remains free for all and is the best action you can take to help us fight off this latest increase in cases and keep local COVID hospitalizations low.”

Cook County would move from a Medium to High Community Level if case counts stayed high and the local COVID-19 hospitalization rate jumped to more than 10 new hospital

admissions per 100,000 population per week. The CDC's measurement of Cook County's hospitalization data for Community Levels reflects the burden on the whole federally defined Health Service Area, which includes Cook, Lake, DuPage, and McHenry Counties.

If hospitals in Chicago remain in good control, CDPH wouldn't reinstate a mask mandate even as the region moved to High. However, that could change if the local health system started to experience that same pressure.

"Even with rising case rates, vaccinated Chicagoans should not let fear of COVID-19 keep them from their favorite summer activities, like going to a Cubs or Sox game, or going to the Grant Park Music Festival, or any of our great street fairs, or block parties," said Arwady. "Enjoy yourselves this summer, but do so wisely. Make sure you and the people you'll be with are fully vaccinated, including booster shots. Gather outdoors when you can. Keep your masks on hand in case you're in situations where you wind up in crowded indoor spaces."

On Thursday, the CDC expanded eligibility of a "booster" (third) dose to 5-to-11-year-olds who received a Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine (the only vaccine available to those under age 18). Pfizer boosters should be received at least five months after completing an initial COVID-19 vaccine series. CDPH supports these decisions and encourages all eligible Chicagoans, age 5 and up, to get their booster dose now – no matter the type of COVID-19 vaccine they originally received. The CDC recommends either of the mRNA vaccines (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna) as the booster dose. Adults 50 years and older, as well as moderately or severely immunocompromised individuals, may receive a second mRNA booster. Find more information about boosters on [CDPH's website](#).

While 76% of Chicagoans age 12 and up have completed their primary COVID-19 vaccine series, just 42% have also had the recommended vaccine booster—despite recommendations that everyone age 12 and over receive a booster five months after completing the primary vaccine series. People age 50 and over are also eligible for a second booster, but even among Chicagoans age 65 and older, just 58% have had even one booster.

Chicago continues to offer free Pfizer vaccines, including first and second boosters, to *all* Chicagoans through *Protect Chicago At Home*. Schedule an appointment at your home, on your schedule (including evenings and weekends) through chicago.gov/athome or by calling 312-746-4835.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) determines COVID-19 Community Levels as Low, Medium, or High, based on the number of new local COVID-19 cases, COVID-19 hospital admissions, and COVID-19 hospital capacity in the prior week. Cook County (combining Chicago and suburban Cook data) counted 338 COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents over the past seven days. Last week that number was 259.

Visit chi.gov/coviddash for the Chicago COVID-19 daily data dashboard. When the CDC updates its COVID-19 Community Levels national map each week (typically on Thursday evenings), City of Chicago and suburban Cook County data are combined into one weekly

case metric for Cook County. Hospitalization data, in contrast, reflect burden on the whole federally defined Health Service Area, which includes hospitals in Cook, Lake, DuPage, and McHenry counties. CDPH continues to track and report COVID-19 hospital burden specifically for Chicago hospitals every day on its dashboard and uses this local hospital data to make mitigation decisions.

Chicago Public Schools is encouraging indoor masking and the CTA is encouraging riders to wear masks on buses and trains. Free masks are available on buses and at rail stations and in school settings across Chicago. Individual businesses or settings may enact their own mask or vaccination requirements, and patrons of those businesses should respect and adhere to such requirements.

According to the CDC, 24.2 percent – or 780 – of the 3,220 counties in the U.S. and Puerto Rico are now at Medium or High COVID-19 Community Levels. That is a 31.5 percent increase from last week.

In Illinois, 47 of the state’s 102 counties are now at a Medium or High Community Level. Currently eight counties in Illinois are at a High Level, where there were none last week. Cook County is one of 39 Illinois counties at a Medium Level – up from 23 last week and 14 two weeks ago. Though the number of counties at Medium or High Community Levels continues to increase, the great majority of communities at these levels are in the Northeast, New England, and parts of the upper Midwest, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. Most of Indiana, Missouri, and Ohio remain in the Low level.

COVID-19 Community Levels in U.S. by County

	Community Level	Number of Counties	Percent of Counties	% Change from Prior Week
	High	297 (137 last week)	9.21%	4.96%
	Medium	483 (456 last week)	14.98%	0.83%
	Low	2444 (2630 last week)	75.81%	-5.79%

ALL travelers should check the CDC [map](#) so they know whether the areas they are traveling to are at a Low, Medium, or High COVID-19 Community Level. Anyone traveling to a part of the country at Medium or High Level is urged to take appropriate precautions.

- If areas are **Low Level (green)**, no additional action must be taken. Continue to follow standard guidance related to travel and up-to-date vaccination.
- If the areas are **Medium Level (yellow)**, CDPH recommends individuals wear a mask in indoor public places.
- If the areas are **High Level (orange)**:
 - Wear a mask in indoor public places.

- Travelers who are age 5 or older who are *not* up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines are advised to avoid travel to High Level counties.
- Unvaccinated Chicagoans age 5 or older who travel to High Level counties are advised to follow CDC guidance upon returning to Chicago:
 - Stay home and quarantine for 5 days after travel
 - Take a COVID test 3-5 days after return – if it is positive, stay home and [follow CDC guidance](#).
- ALL travelers are also advised to:
 - Ensure you are up-to-date with COVID-19 vaccines (including boosters) *before* any planned travel.
 - Self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms; isolate and get tested if you develop symptoms.
 - Consider packing an at-home COVID test in case you develop symptoms while traveling.
 - Bring a mask with you. Masks may be required by individual airports, airlines, and public transit agencies. Businesses may also still choose to require masks.