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**CDPH COVID-19 Update:  
Chicago and Cook County move from 'Low' to 'Medium'  
COVID Community Level**

*CDPH strongly recommending masking in public indoor spaces*

CHICAGO – With COVID-19 cases continuing to gradually increase, Cook County and the City of Chicago moved from Low into the Medium [COVID-19 Community Level](#), the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) announced today. With this move, CDPH is strongly recommending masking in public indoor spaces in Chicago, including on public transit, but is not reinstating any mandates. Chicagoans should also ensure that they and everyone in their social network is up-to-date with COVID-19 vaccines and boosters; test in the setting of any potential COVID-19 symptoms; and continue to follow all isolation and quarantine requirements.

“We’ve been expecting to reach the Medium Level for some time now,” said Allison Arwady, M.D., Commissioner of CDPH. “It’s not a cause for alarm, since most cases right now are mild and thankfully our COVID-19 hospitalizations and deaths remain at or near all-time pandemic lows in Chicago. But it is reason for more caution, and for more care with masking, since more people in Chicago are infected with COVID right now. Remember that people can spread COVID for two days before they develop symptoms, so putting on a mask in public indoor settings is an easy way to help protect our city while we’re at a Medium COVID Level.”

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 259 COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents over the past seven days, which pushed the county over the 200 case threshold for the Medium Level. But to reach the High Level, local COVID-19 hospitalizations also need to be higher—meaning that there is little short-term risk of reaching a High COVID-19 community level locally and new mandates are not imminent.

“Chicago moving into the Medium Level does *not* mean a citywide mask mandate, restrictions on public gatherings, or reinstatement of vaccination requirements at this time,” said Dr. Arwady. “With the way the current COVID variants are behaving, those are

measures we would consider if we reached the High COVID-19 community level—which we aren’t close to reaching in Chicago right now. But we obviously don’t want to get there, and exercising some more caution now will help us keep COVID in control in Chicago.”

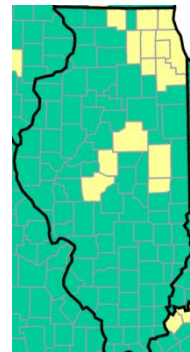
“In the meantime,” said Arwady, “we strongly urge people to mask up in public indoor settings and on public transportation. This shouldn’t stop anyone from going to work or school, or traveling on CTA buses and trains, but taking that precaution will help protect everyone. And anyone who is at higher risk for severe outcomes because of age or underlying conditions should reach out to their doctor right away if they are diagnosed with COVID. There are early treatments available that cut the risk of hospitalization by more than 80%.”

Individual businesses or settings may enact their own mask or vaccination requirements, and patrons of those businesses should respect and adhere to such requirements.

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.

According to the CDC, 12.3 percent – or 397 – 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 26 percent increase from last week.

Cook County is among nine northeast Illinois counties – with Lake, McHenry, Winnebago, DeKalb, Kane, DuPage, Kendall, and Will – now at a Medium Level. Five central Illinois counties are also at a Medium Level. Other parts of the Midwest at a Medium COVID-19 Community Level include the areas surrounding Milwaukee, Minneapolis-St. Paul, and Detroit. The only counties in the Midwest at a High Level are Grand Traverse County, in northwest Michigan, and Pennington County, in northwest Minnesota.



The Northeast and New England remain the nation’s COVID-19 hotspot. Nearly all U.S. counties at a High COVID-19 Community Level are in an area stretching from Erie County in western New York to the northern tip of Maine.

The CDC earlier this week renewed its travel masking guidelines. CDC recommends that everyone aged 2 and older – including passengers and workers – wear a well-fitting [mask or respirator](#) over the nose and mouth on transportation such as airplanes, trains, and buses and in transportation hubs such as airports and transit stations.

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

	Community Level	Number of Counties	Percent of Counties	% Change from Prior Week
	High	79 (56 last week)	2.45%	0.71%
	Medium	318 (258 last week)	9.86%	1.86%
	Low	2827 (2910 last week)	87.69%	-2.57%

The Chicago Department of Public Health tracks and reports many COVID-19 metrics daily for City of Chicago residents, while the Cook County Department of Public Health does so for suburban Cook County residents (excluding Chicago). Visit [chi.gov/coviddash](https://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), both City of Chicago and suburban Cook County daily data are combined into one weekly metric for Cook County. Locally, Chicago adjusts its COVID-19 Community Level if EITHER the City or the whole of Cook County reach the threshold determined by CDC.

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 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 vaccination.
- If the areas are **Medium Level (yellow)**, consider wearing 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.