



May 13, 2022

Contact:

COVID-19 Joint Information Center
media.coronavirus@cityofchicago.org

CDPH COVID-19 Update:
Chicago and Cook County remain at Medium COVID Community Level
CDPH strongly recommends masking in public indoor spaces

CHICAGO – A growing area of northern Illinois, including Chicago and suburban Cook County, is at a Medium [COVID-19 Community Level](#), the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) announced today. This is the second week that Chicago is at the Medium Level.

There is no indication that Chicago is on track to reach the High Level anytime soon, and as such, CDPH continues to strongly recommend masking in public indoor spaces in Chicago, including on public transit, but mask requirements and similar mitigation efforts will be left to the discretion of individual businesses.

Chicagoans should also ensure that they and everyone in their social network is 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.

“The rise in COVID-19 cases has been something we are watching closely and it’s something that we are not taking lightly,” said Allison Arwady, M.D., Commissioner of CDPH. “We saw this Medium Level coming for Chicago earlier this month, and we’ve been working to get the message out to everyone throughout the city to keep vigilant against COVID-19 – that means continuing to wear a mask and be aware of your surroundings and those around you when you’re in public indoor spaces. We’ve seen so many changes through this pandemic, but the one fact that has never changed is that the best way to protect yourself against COVID-19 is to make sure that you are fully vaccinated and boosted.”

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 337.9 COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents over the past seven days. Last week that number was 259. 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 mask mandates are not imminent.

“As cases rise in Chicago, remember, we have the tools – namely vaccines and masks – to fight it back,” said Arwady. “Don’t live in fear of COVID, but respect it – meaning we all need to continue to take it seriously and take the precautions necessary to protect everyone. Being vaccinated and masking won’t entirely prevent COVID-19, but it will most likely keep you from serious illness and hospitalization.”

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, 18.4 percent – or 593 – 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 49.4 percent increase from last week.

Cook County is among 23 Illinois counties (up from 14 last week) now at a Medium Level. No Illinois counties have reached a High Level, but closest to home, Kenosha and Racine Counties in Wisconsin are at a High Level. There are 15 counties in Michigan, in areas that include Detroit, Ann Arbor, Traverse City, and Mackinac County, at a High Level. There are no Indiana counties at a High Level.

The Northeast and New England remain the nation’s largest area of Medium to High COVID Community Levels. Except for Essex County, Vermont, every county in New England is at Medium or High Level.

The CDC last 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	137 (79 last week)	4.25%	1.8%
	Medium	456 (318 last week)	14.15%	4.28%
	Low	2630 (2827 last week)	81.6%	-6.09%

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 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)**, it is recommended 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.