

Press Release

Hamilton County Health Department



Web: health.hamiltontn.org

****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

April 27, 2021

Health Department Encourages Residents to Continue Wearing Masks as Recommended by the CDC

HAMILTON COUNTY, TN - The Hamilton County Health Department will continue to encourage county residents, businesses, and schools to follow Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations to use a mask and practice physical distancing, even after the mask mandate is lifted Thursday, April 29, 2021.

“The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has affected everyone in our county in one way or another,” says Dr. Urrego, Interim Health Officer with the Hamilton County Health Department. “As of April 27th, 44,006 cases and 491 deaths have been reported in Hamilton County. Since the first case was identified March of 2020 and throughout the pandemic, the Hamilton County Health Department has recommended and implemented public health measures to mitigate transmission of the SARS-CoV-2. The health department’s efforts have and will continue to focus on the health of the residents of Hamilton County.”

Mitigation efforts that have proven to be effective in reducing the spread of SARS-CoV-2 include:

- Wearing a mask
- Physical distancing
- Hand washing

Early in the pandemic, the Health Department recommended these measures and a reduction of cases was seen. When the mask mandate was put in place July 10th, 2020 the rising trend of Covid-19 cases stabilized proving the efficacy of masks to reduce transmission. Later in the year, the county had a significant surge in cases that were probably due to inconsistent use of mask wearing and physical distancing combined with increased travel and gatherings for the holidays.

A combination of more consistent practice of mitigation measures and the introduction of vaccines have now brought cases of Covid-19 to levels seen right before the time the mask mandate was originally put in place. Although the cases have significantly decreased compared to the peak of the last surge, the cases remain at a level considered high by the (CDC) and mitigation measures should continue.

This week, the mask mandate is due to expire allowing residents and businesses to choose whether they want to continue with SARS-CoV-2 mitigation measures. The Hamilton County Health Department will continue to encourage county residents, businesses, and schools to follow CDC recommendations to use a mask and practice physical distancing.

The Health Department’s recommendations to continue to wear a mask are based on many factors:

- First, the cases in the community remain high and there is evidence of more transmissible variants of the SARS-CoV-2 in our community.
- Second, a significant number of eligible residents have not been vaccinated and remain at risk.

Wearing a mask and physically distancing are effective measures that, when consistently used by everyone, will protect our community.

The Health Department's recommendations of when masks are not needed will follow recent revised guidelines recommended by the CDC.

- Vaccinated people can visit with other fully vaccinated people indoors without wearing a mask or physically distance.
- Recommendations to wear a mask indoors in public spaces for both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals is still recommended.
- Vaccinated people can safely go outdoors without wearing a mask to exercise and gather in small groups as well as dine outdoors- but should still consider wearing a mask when in large outside gatherings.
- Unvaccinated people may also go outdoors to exercise and attend small outdoor gatherings with fully vaccinated family and friends.

The Health Department encourages those that have not been vaccinated to consider the many activities that are now safe to do without being at risk for getting covid-19. Vaccination opportunities are readily available in Hamilton County. Those who are interested in learning more can visit the Health Department's [website](#), call the COVID-19 hotline at 423-209-8383, or visit vaccinefinder.org to identify other vaccination sites in Hamilton County.

The Health Department's mask recommendations will be modified and updated as the status of the pandemic evolves.

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