DALLAS COUNTY COVID-19 Updated

HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR THE PUBLIC

10/29/2021

Photo by Aleksey Kuprikov
The Delta variant and subvariants continues be widespread in North Texas which requires us to intermittently revise, update, and reframe our recommendations. Increasing vaccination coverage remains the number one priority to reduce transmission and the risk of additional emerging variants. The updated Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidance for fully vaccinated individuals (see links below) is based on how remarkably effective these vaccines are at reducing and preventing severe illness, hospitalizations, and death.

This CDC guidance describes what activities may be safely resumed by fully vaccinated persons. It also indicates that additional precautions are recommended in areas of high or substantial spread, especially of the highly infectious Delta variant and subvariants such as is occurring in North Texas.

Due to the widespread availability of safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines as well as the increasing vaccination rates in Dallas and the surrounding counties, the Public Health Committee has updated its public guidance to redefine risk among vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals. We cannot anticipate every situation and are therefore providing a framework to help everyone critically assess activities to make the best personal decision but also to provide tips on how to make activities safer.

Over the past 20 months, we have witnessed a dynamic and rapidly changing pandemic that has required ongoing changes in recommendations. Since inception, our goal is to make this a “living” document and we will change it as rapidly as science and data require.

Finally, ending this pandemic requires everyone to help! We want to get back to normal, too. In order to do that, we need everyone who can get vaccinated to get vaccinated. Individuals who are eligible should also receive their booster (third dose) when appropriate. Until more people are vaccinated we need everyone to continue following proven intervention measures to reduce spread. Please help us help you!

**Interim Public Health Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People**

**Updated Healthcare Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations in Response to COVID-19 Vaccination**

**Post Vaccination for Workplaces**

**Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 Vaccination**

**COVID-19 Data Tracker (for community transmission levels)**
https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#datatracker-home
1 ASSUME PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Public health guidance cannot anticipate every unique situation. Residents should act responsibly, stay informed, take actions based on common sense, and follow the guidance offered by health care experts. Please get vaccinated for COVID-19 and wear a mask when appropriate.

2 DO AN HONEST SELF-ASSESSMENT

In addition, all individuals are encouraged to perform an honest self-assessment before engaging in activities outside of the home. This assessment should include asking two or three questions:

Am I healthy enough to leave the home, or do I fall into a high-risk category, based on age or other medical conditions?

Is there someone in my home, or someone I interact with on a regular basis, who falls into a high-risk category?

If the answer to either of these questions is yes, then exercise extra caution and discretion before leaving the home. Is it a want or is it a need?

If I do leave home, can I make this activity safer?
3 PERFORM PROTECTIVE HYGIENE, DISTANCE YOURSELF PHYSICALLY, AND CLEAN THE ENVIRONMENT

Everyone should practice good hygiene and cleaning practices to minimize the risk of transmission of the virus. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Wear an appropriate facial covering or mask when out in public or when in the company of others. Multilayer paper, cotton/cloth, or other appropriate masks are highly preferred to fleece, bandanas, or “gaiter” style coverings that do not offer the same level of protection or droplet reduction. Masks with vents should not be worn around others as they put others at risk.

- Physically distance and keep at least 6 feet between people to reduce the risk of spread.

- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds as frequently as possible or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer after interactions with people or objects.

- Stay home if ill or if quarantining following exposure to COVID-19.

- Cover coughs or sneezes into the sleeve or elbow, not hands.

- Clean high-touch surfaces (buttons, door handles, counters, etc.) regularly.

- Avoid touching your face. Refrain from hand shaking.

4 ASSESS THE RISK

Individuals should assess their risk and make decisions based on their specific circumstances. Those at high risk for COVID-19 (elderly, diabetic, immunocompromised, obese, unvaccinated, etc.) and those around them should use extra precautions as outlined by the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), and Dallas County Health and Human Services (DCHHS). For additional guidance see the Dallas County Guidance for individuals at high-risk for severe COVID-19 or complications from COVID-19.

Make wise choices. Assess the situation and implement practices to make it as safe as possible by wearing a mask and physically distancing. Preferentially choose outdoor settings and if an activity is indoor, select well-ventilated buildings or rooms. Minimize activities in crowds, especially where you do not know the vaccination status of those surrounding you. Some activities or settings may not be safe for some people.

5 PREVENTION

We recommend all eligible individuals including children receive a COVID-19 vaccine series and the seasonal flu vaccine.

We encourage everyone to frequent businesses and events that protect your safety by having universal vaccination and masking policies.
GENERAL AND SMART CHOICES

Do not participate in any activities if you have fever, cough, or other symptoms of COVID-19.
**Exposing people to illness contributes to spread and the Delta variant is highly contagious.**

Outdoor, as opposed to indoor, activities decrease the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
**Outdoors is better.**

If indoor activities are considered, spaces/rooms that are well-ventilated decrease the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
**Increasing ventilation is best.**

As the number of people in a group activity increases, the risk of COVID-19 transmission increases.
**Increased numbers of people are riskier.**

Greater distance between people decreases the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
**More space is good.**

Projecting voices (cheering, yelling, singing, breathing hard) increases the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
**Less projection is best.**

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DALLAS COUNTY RISK GUIDANCE

This Dallas County Risk Guidance system weighs individual/group activities against the risk of acquiring COVID-19 and is based on data from the State of Texas, the CDC, and other national and international public health authorities. The system includes four levels of risk: **RED, ORANGE, YELLOW,** and **GREEN.** The members of the Public Health Committee use the latest information on local disease activity to advise county officials on the risk level that applies. Specific indicators for changing risk level can be found on the Dallas County website: Dallas County Key Covid-19 Response Metrics/Indicators.

This document specifies the most recent recommendations specific to the **Red** and **Orange** risk levels. Because we have so much transmission of the Delta strain and not enough fully vaccinated people, we must rethink our activities. The metrics to evaluate each level of risk have remained the same although you will see that some of our recommendations have changed to meet the challenges of the more dangerous Delta variant.

The color-coded guidance system was put together under the leadership of the Public Health Committee and the DCHHS Department to provide direction to Dallas County residents during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.
Guidance for *Fully Vaccinated* Individuals at High and Moderate Transmission

- Vaccinated individuals have more options to return to normal but need to be careful when COVID-19 is widely spreading in the community, especially with the Delta variant and subvariants. Before participating in activities, utilize options to make the activity safer such as masking, assuring adequate physical distances, or avoiding crowded spaces. Choose outdoors over indoors when possible. Be especially careful around individuals who are coughing or projecting their voice and potentially sending virus into the air.

- If you are vaccinated AND have a known exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, you should be tested 5-7 days after exposure and should wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days or until you receive a negative test result. If you develop symptoms at any point, you should mask, isolate, and be tested.

- Even if you don’t know you’ve been exposed to someone with COVID-19, if you are sick (fever or respiratory symptoms, sore throat etc), please get tested. If you test positive, follow appropriate isolation measures and cooperate with your local public health officials to avoid spreading the virus.

- Please wear a face mask in **ALL** public indoor settings when around other people and where distancing can’t be maintained, and in outdoor settings where physical distancing is not possible.

- Consider limiting or avoiding medium to large social gatherings. If you must attend, outside is safer. If it is an indoor social gathering, remember to mask, maintain physical distance and, ensure proper ventilation by keeping doors or windows open.

- Avoid high-risk indoor settings, such as bars, restaurants, concerts, or gatherings where masks can’t be worn the entire time. Opt for outdoor seating on patios or simply order food to go.

- Consider virtual options when available for personal and professional meetings/gatherings, especially for larger meetings or conference settings.

- Consider ordering curbside, store pick-up, and delivery for groceries and retail to reduce time indoors in public settings. If those options are not available, mask while indoors and reduce the number of trips or go to stores at less crowded times.

- Breathing hard, exercising, singing, cheering, or voice projection increase the likelihood of spreading viral particles, especially when indoors.
Guidance for Periods of High and Moderate Community Transmission for *Unvaccinated, Partially Vaccinated, or Immunocompromised Individuals*

- Unvaccinated, partially vaccinated, or immunocompromised individuals have limited immunity to the virus causing COVID-19. These individuals are at much higher risk of getting COVID-19, severe illness, and contributing to the spread and must therefore take more precautions. Because COVID-19 is widely spreading in the community and the Delta variant is more contagious, it is important to be vigilant. Before participating in activities, consider options to make the activity safe, such as masking, assuring adequate physical distances, or avoiding crowded spaces. Choose outdoors over indoors. Be careful around individuals who are coughing or projecting their voice and potentially sending virus into the air. Some activities are not safe and not recommended.

- If you are interested in getting vaccinated, resources and information are available at vaccines.gov.

- Individuals should avoid any public settings if they are feeling sick and seek testing. Masks should be worn in public.

- Mask in all indoor public settings as well as outdoor settings where distancing can’t be maintained.

- Avoid all indoor high-risk settings where there is crowding or potentially poor ventilation, or where masks are likely to be removed, such as restaurants, bars, movie theaters, concert venues, and gyms.

- For essential activities such as grocery shopping or retail, curbside or delivery is encouraged. For in-person trips, masking should be maintained for the duration of the trip.

- Medium or larger social gatherings should be avoided entirely. For small gatherings, consider pre-event testing for unvaccinated attendees to avoid spreading or contracting COVID.

- For small private gatherings, outdoor activities are highly preferred for unvaccinated or mixed status gatherings. Avoid even small indoor gatherings.

- Utilize virtual attendance to the greatest extent possible, including virtual religious services, conferences, or social events.
  - If attending in-person, masking, and physical distancing should be strictly maintained.
Quick Reference Chart: ORANGE RISK

It is not possible to anticipate all settings/activities or scenarios. In general we recommend favoring outdoor settings over indoors, and if in an indoor setting, select sites with good ventilation. Avoid crowds, crowded times, and choose locations that allow physical distancing. Frequenting locations with policies such as masking, employee vaccinations, routine employee testing or other safety measures is preferable. Immunosuppressed individuals include those that have underlying medical conditions or treatments that weaken the immune system. Unvaccinated individuals over 65 are at increased risk. Unvaccinated children should be considered in assessing risk.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity/Setting*</th>
<th>Guidance for Vaccinated Individuals at the Orange Risk Level</th>
<th>Guidance for Unvaccinated, Partially Vaccinated or Immunosuppressed Individuals at the Orange Risk Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants</td>
<td>Outdoor settings or patio preferred. Avoid dine-in eating unless tables are &gt; 6 feet apart and masking in patrons and staff is observed when not eating.</td>
<td>Avoid all indoor or crowded outdoor settings. Take-out, curbside, or delivery strongly preferred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bars</td>
<td>Generally high-risk setting. Outdoor or patio preferred. Avoid indoor seating unless tables are distanced and masking is observed when not drinking.</td>
<td>Avoid all indoor settings. Mask and distance while not drinking if outdoors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>Go to establishments with masking, crowd controls, and physical distancing. Mask in all indoor setting and avoid busy times when more people may be present.</td>
<td>Mask in all indoor settings. Curbside or delivery preferred. Limit trips and go off peak hours and days. Use establishments with masking, crowd controls, physical distancing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel/Tourism</td>
<td>Don’t travel if sick. People who are fully vaccinated can travel within the United States and internationally subject to federal requirements. Wear a mask during all travel and follow local guidance upon arrival. Self-monitor for COVID-19 after travel and get tested if symptoms develop. At your destination, go to establishments with masking, crowd controls, and physical distancing. Some places require proof of vaccination or testing.</td>
<td>Don’t travel if sick, exposed to COVID, or waiting on a test result. Delay travel until you are fully vaccinated. For essential/emergency travel, get tested 1-3 days before travel. Wear a mask during all travel. Avoid crowds, mask, and physically distance, in addition to following all local guidance of destination. Get tested 3-5 days after return. If negative, quarantine until day 7 after return. If you don’t get tested stay home for 10 days following return. Self-monitor for COVID-19 following return and get tested if symptoms develop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events / Entertainment: Indoors (e.g. Movies, Indoor Concerts, Bowling etc)</td>
<td>Use establishments with masking, crowd controls, physical distancing and/or testing. Mask in all indoor settings; physically distance if possible. Small and medium sized events in well-ventilated settings preferred.</td>
<td>Avoid this type of event indoors. Outdoor events may be considered as long as you are physically distanced and/or masked when around other people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events / Entertainment: Outdoors (e.g. Arboretum, Zoo, Outdoor Concerts etc.)</td>
<td>Use establishments with masking, crowd controls, physical distancing and/or pre-event testing. Mask unless distancing of at least 6 feet is possible. Small and medium sized events preferred. Large events may be considered if masking and distancing are in place.</td>
<td>Mask and physically distance. Avoid all events where masking and/or distancing are not in place. Avoid large events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Services or Funeral</td>
<td>Use establishments with masking, crowd controls, physical distancing and/or testing. Masks should especially be worn by those singing or projecting their voice as those actions increase spread. Singing and choirs are high risk; large congregations/gatherings are</td>
<td>Avoid in-person attendance. Utilize virtual options. Small settings with masking and physical distancing in place may be considered if choosing only establishments with masking, crowd controls, physical distancing and routine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Activity/Setting:

- Restaurants
- Bars
- Shopping
- Travel/Tourism
- Events / Entertainment: Indoors (e.g. Movies, Indoor Concerts, Bowling etc)
- Events / Entertainment: Outdoors (e.g. Arboretum, Zoo, Outdoor Concerts etc.)
- Religious Services or Funeral

Guidance for Unvaccinated, Partially Vaccinated or Immunosuppressed Individuals at the Orange Risk Level:

- Avoid all indoor or crowded outdoor settings. Take-out, curbside, or delivery strongly preferred.
- Avoid all indoor settings. Mask and distance while not drinking if outdoors.
- Mask in all indoor settings. Curbside or delivery preferred. Limit trips and go off peak hours and days. Use establishments with masking, crowd controls, physical distancing.
- Don’t travel if sick, exposed to COVID, or waiting on a test result. Delay travel until you are fully vaccinated. For essential/emergency travel, get tested 1-3 days before travel. Wear a mask during all travel. Avoid crowds, mask, and physically distance, in addition to following all local guidance of destination. Get tested 3-5 days after return. If negative, quarantine until day 7 after return. If you don’t get tested stay home for 10 days following return. Self-monitor for COVID-19 following return and get tested if symptoms develop.
- Avoid this type of event indoors. Outdoor events may be considered as long as you are physically distanced and/or masked when around other people.
- Mask and physically distance. Avoid all events where masking and/or distancing are not in place. Avoid large events.
- Avoid in-person attendance. Utilize virtual options. Small settings with masking and physical distancing in place may be considered if choosing only establishments with masking, crowd controls, physical distancing and routine.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Activity Type</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Small Private Gatherings</strong> (BBQs, Birthday Parties, etc.)</td>
<td>Mask and physically distance if indoors. Small family groups of fully vaccinated individuals may be considered. Increasing indoor ventilation of any gatherings is advised. Outdoor gathering preferred. Avoid all indoor settings outside your household. Outside events may be considered with masking and/or physical distancing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Museums and Libraries</strong></td>
<td>Mask and physically distance. Outdoor exhibits preferred. Not recommended. Utilize virtual options. Book pick up could be considered if masked and distanced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal Services</strong> (Nail salons, haircuts, etc.)</td>
<td>Use establishments with masking, crowd controls, physical distancing and/or testing. Seek off peak appointment times. Outdoor or in-home services preferred. Not recommended. If services are required for hygiene reasons, Use establishments with masking, crowd controls, physical distancing and/or testing. Outdoor or in-home services preferred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gyms</strong></td>
<td>These are high-risk. Exertion activities (e.g. basket and racket ball), especially if unmasked increase the risk of transmission. Use establishments with masking, crowd controls, physical distancing and/or testing. Avoid shared equipment if indoors. Outdoor options or small group indoors with physical distancing preferred. Not recommended. Use home workouts or outdoor walks/runs with physical distancing.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Public Swimming Pools</strong></td>
<td>Outdoor settings preferred. Use establishments with masking (except when in water), crowd controls, physical distancing and/or testing. Maintain physical distancing while swimming since masks can’t be worn. Not recommended. Outdoor options with physical distancing may be considered. Avoid all indoor settings of facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual Sports</strong></td>
<td>Outdoor settings preferred. Mask and physical distance outdoors. Outdoor settings preferred. Utilize physical distancing and mask in all areas where distancing can’t be maintained. Avoid indoor settings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Team Sports</strong></td>
<td>Outdoor settings preferred. Mask and physical distance as possible. Consider routine testing as an additional safety strategy. Monitor for illness. Not recommended. Masking and physical distancing should be maintained if participating. Testing advised before participating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth Sports</strong></td>
<td>Smaller group, lower contact sports preferred. Consider testing as an additional safety strategy. Monitor for illness. Not generally recommended. Individual or modified options may be considered. Testing advised before participating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth Camps and Summer Camps</strong></td>
<td>Use establishments with masking (except when in water), crowd controls, physical distancing and routine testing. Camps with an emphasis on outdoor activities are preferred. Monitor for illness. Not recommended. Small groups may be considered with consistent use of prevention strategies, including but not limited to masking, physical distancing, outdoor setting, cohorting and routine testing, etc. Avoid sleepover camps.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional References:
