DALLAS COUNTY COVID-19 Updated
HEALTH GUIDANCE
FOR THE PUBLIC
December 2021
Increasing COVID-19 vaccine coverage and assuring the “series” is complete remain the top priorities to reduce COVID-19 transmission and the risk of additional emerging variants. The updated Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidance for fully vaccinated and boosted individuals (see links below) is based on how remarkably effective these vaccines are at reducing and preventing severe COVID-19 illness, hospitalizations, and death.

The CDC guidance describes what activities may be safely resumed by fully vaccinated and boosted persons. However, with the emergence of the extremely infectious Omicron variant, the CDC and this guidance encourages the use of additional precautions in areas of high or substantial spread.

As safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines are widely available, the expanded ages that can receive the vaccine and the increasing vaccination rates in Dallas and the surrounding counties, the Public Health Committee has updated its public guidance to redefine risk among fully vaccinated and boosted 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 completely vaccinated. Individuals should also receive their booster (third dose) as soon as they are eligible. Until more people are vaccinated, we need everyone to continue to make wise and safer choices and follow 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

CDC Statement on Recommended Isolation and Quarantine
https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2021/s1227-isolation-quarantine-guidance.html

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
ASSUME PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

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

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 a few questions:

Am I healthy enough to leave the home or go into a setting, 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?

Am I fully vaccinated and does this provide me with some protection?

If I do leave home or include others, can I make this activity safer?
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 or mesh 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.

- Get tested. 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.

- Choose well ventilated spaces.

- Use rapid SARS-CoV-2 tests to test people coming to an event.

ASSESS THE RISK

Individuals should assess their risk and make decisions based on their specific circumstances. Those at high risk for COVID-19 complications (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 even when fully vaccinated and boosted. Assess the situation and implement practices to make it as safe as possible by wearing a mask and physically distancing. Consider using rapid tests before having family or friends over to join you for activities. Choose outdoor settings, but if an activity must be indoors, 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.

PREVENTION

We recommend all eligible individuals including children receive a COVID-19 vaccine series including a booster when eligible 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 a fever, cough, or other respiratory symptoms of COVID-19. Consider testing yourself with a rapid test. Remember that if you are vaccinated, the symptoms may be milder and similar to a “cold”.

**Exposing people to illness contributes to spread and the current variants that are highly contagious.**

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

If indoor activities are considered, spaces/rooms that are well-ventilated (such as with open windows) decrease the risk of COVID-19 transmission. **Increasing ventilation is better.**

As the number of people in a group activity increases, the risk of COVID-19 transmission increases. **Fewer people are less risky.**

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. **Avoid participating in activities where these activities may be taking place.**

**Venues with mask and vaccination requirements are strongly suggested.**

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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 and Omicron strains, and do not have enough fully vaccinated and boosted people, we must continue to use masks, physically distance and choose less crowded and well ventilated spaces. In other words, we should substitute and 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 Delta and more transmissible Omicron variants.

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 and Boosted** Individuals at High and Moderate Community Transmission

- COVID-19 vaccinated and boosted individuals have more options to return to normal but need to be careful when COVID-19 activity is high in the community, especially with the Delta and emerging Omicron variants. Before participating in activities, utilize options to make the activity safer including masking, assuring adequate physical distances and improved ventilation, 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, wear a mask in public indoor settings for 10 days after exposure and get tested 5 days after exposure. If you develop symptoms at any point, mask, isolate, and get tested again.

- 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. For indoor social gatherings, mask, maintain physical distance and ensure proper ventilation by keeping doors or windows open.

- Test individuals with rapid tests prior to including them in social gatherings. If they test positive, they should go home and isolate.

- 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, Unboosted 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 take more precautions. Because COVID-19 is widely spreading in the community and the Delta and Omicron variants are more contagious, be especially careful. Before participating in activities, consider options to make the activity safe, such as masking, assuring adequate physical distances, using well ventilated venues or avoiding crowded spaces. Choose outdoors over indoors. Avoid 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 [www.vaccines.gov](http://www.vaccines.gov).

- Individuals who are feeling sick should avoid any public setting and seek testing. Masks should be worn in public.

- If you are unvaccinated, undervaccinated, or not recently vaccinated and boosted and have a known exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, stay home for 5 days, wear a mask in public indoor settings for 10 days after exposure and get tested 5 days after exposure. If you develop symptoms at any point, mask, isolate, and get tested again.

- Mask in all indoor public settings AND 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 private gatherings, outdoor activities are highly preferred for unvaccinated or mixed status gatherings. All attendees should be tested immediately prior to attending.

- Utilize virtual attendance to the greatest extent possible, including virtual religious services, conferences, or social events.
  - If attending in-person, mask and physically distance to protect yourself and those around you.
Quick Reference Chart: **RED RISK**

It is not possible to anticipate all settings/activities or scenarios. Individuals who have not yet received or are not yet eligible for a booster are still well protected, but may be at more risk. Unvaccinated individuals remain the most vulnerable and should get vaccinated as soon as possible to reduce the risk of severe disease and hospitalization. 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 are well ventilated and allow physical distancing. Frequenting locations with policies such as masking, employee vaccinations, routine employee testing or other safety measures is a common sense approach. Immunocompromised individuals include those that have underlying medical conditions or treatments that weaken the immune system. Extra caution is required for unvaccinated individuals, all individuals over 65, and children too young to be vaccinated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity/Setting*</th>
<th>Guidance for Vaccinated Individuals at the Red Risk Level</th>
<th>Guidance for Unvaccinated, Partially Vaccinated or Immunosuppressed Individuals at Red Risk Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Restaurants</strong></td>
<td>Outdoor settings or patio preferred. Avoid dine-in eating unless tables are &gt; 6 feet apart and patrons and staff mask when not eating. Use settings with vaccination standards.</td>
<td>Avoid indoor or crowded outdoor settings. Take-out, curbside, or delivery strongly preferred. Use settings with masking and vaccination standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bars</strong></td>
<td>Generally high-risk setting. Avoid all indoor settings. Mask and distance while not drinking if outdoors.</td>
<td>Avoid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shopping</strong></td>
<td>Go to establishments with masking, crowd controls, and physical distancing. Mask in all indoor settings and avoid busy times when more people may be present.</td>
<td>Mask in all indoor settings. Curbside or delivery and off peak hours and days preferred. Use establishments with masking, crowd controls, physical distancing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Travel/Tourism</strong></td>
<td>Avoid unnecessary travel and don’t travel if sick. People who are fully vaccinated (2 doses and booster) should consider the risk of traveling. While travel can occur within the United States, international travel may have additional requirements for entry into the destination and return to the US and 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. For travel, you may need to get tested 1-3 days before leaving (destination specific). At your destination, go to establishments with masking, crowd controls, and physical distancing. Some places require proof of vaccination or testing.</td>
<td>Avoid all nonessential travel. Do not travel if sick, exposed to COVID, or waiting on a test result. Delay non-essential travel until you are fully vaccinated and boosted especially if international. 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 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><strong>Events / Entertainment: Indoors (e.g. Movies, Indoor Concerts, Bowling etc)</strong></td>
<td>Avoid large and medium events. Outdoor events preferred. Use establishments with masking, crowd controls, physical distancing, vaccination standards, and/or testing. Mask in all indoor settings; physically distance if possible. Small sized events in well-ventilated settings preferred. Test with rapid test 3-5 days after event.</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. Pre-event testing should be utilized if attending.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Events / Entertainment: Outdoors (e.g. Arboretum, Zoo, Outdoor Concerts etc.)</strong></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. Avoid large events.</td>
<td>Mask and physically distance. Avoid all events where masking and/or distancing are not in place. Avoid large events.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*Activity/Setting* refers to the type of event or setting where the guidelines apply. The chart provides guidance for vaccinated individuals and those who are unvaccinated, partially vaccinated, or immunocompromised, and it differentiates their risk levels. The guidance is designed to minimize the risk of transmission while attending these events or settings.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Recommendation Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious Services or Funeral</td>
<td>Use virtual options when possible. Use establishments with masking, crowd controls, physical distancing, vaccination standards, 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 high risk and should be avoided. 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 testing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Private Gatherings (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. Consider pre-event rapid testing. Avoid all indoor settings outside your household. Outside events may be considered with masking and/or physical distancing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Services (Nail salons, haircuts, etc.)</td>
<td>Use establishments with masking, crowd controls, physical distancing, vaccination standards 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>Gyms</td>
<td>Avoid exertion activities (e.g. basket and racket ball), especially if unmasked because of increased risk of transmission. Use establishments with masking, crowd controls, vaccination standards, 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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Swimming Pools</td>
<td>Outdoor settings preferred. Use establishments with masking (except when in water), crowd controls, physical distancing, vaccination standards, 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. Use establishments with masking (except when in water), crowd controls, physical distancing, vaccination standards, and/or testing. Maintain physical distancing while swimming since masks can’t be worn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Sports</td>
<td>Outdoor settings preferred. Mask and physical distance indoors. Outdoor settings preferred. Utilize physical distancing and mask in all areas where distancing can’t be maintained. Avoid indoor settings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Sports</td>
<td>Outdoor settings preferred. Mask and physical distance as possible. Consider vaccination standards and routine testing as an additional safety strategies. Monitor for illness. Not recommended. Masking and physical distancing should be maintained if participating. Testing advised before participating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Sports</td>
<td>Smaller group, lower contact sports preferred. Consider vaccination standards and 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>Youth Camps and Summer Camps</td>
<td>Use establishments with masking (except when in water), crowd controls, physical distancing, vaccination standards 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>

See CDC for considerations:
Isolation and Quarantine Information:

- You **quarantine** when you might have been exposed to the virus and may or may not have been infected.

- You **isolate** when you have been infected with the virus, even if you don’t have symptoms.

Additional References:
