



Department of Public Health

Monroe County, New York

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Unequivocally, well-fitting masks are among the most highly effective measures in a multi-layered strategy to prevent the potentially fatal transmission of COVID-19 and many other diseases.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, however, it has always been prudent to adapt our prevention strategies based on many evolving factors including, but not limited to: scientific evidence, vaccination rates, community transmission rates and hospitalizations.

We have reached a point in the pandemic where it is reasonable for our community to step away from universal masking in favor of a more targeted approach to masking.

When deciding whether to wear a mask or not, consider the following:

- **CURRENT FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL GUIDANCE**
- **YOUR LEVEL OF RISK FOR SEVERE DISEASE OR DEATH FROM COVID** – The higher your individual risk for severe disease or death, the more important it is to wear a mask. If you are unsure of your individual level of risk, it is wise to consult with your health care provider.
- **YOUR VACCINATION STATUS** – Unmasked individuals who are up-to-date on their vaccinations are less at risk than unmasked individuals who are not up-to-date.
- **YOUR SETTING** – Not wearing a mask in small, enclosed areas where you will be close to others outside of your household for more than a few minutes poses a greater risk than being in wider, more open spaces.
- **YOUR DISEASE ACQUIRED IMMUNITY** – Unvaccinated people who have recently experienced COVID are less at risk when unmasked than unvaccinated people without any disease acquired immunity.
- **YOUR TYPE OF MASK** – N95 or KN95 masks are better at preventing individuals from becoming infected than other types of masks are.
- **YOUR COMMUNITY'S/GROUP'S VACCINATION RATE** – The higher the vaccination rate of a population (county, school district, religious congregation, etc.), the lower the risk of transmission without masking.
- **THE PREVELANCE OF COVID-19 IN YOUR COMMUNITY/GROUP** – The more people infected within your circle, the greater your risk of contracting COVID if you are not properly masked.
- **YOUR ABILITY TO PROPERLY WEAR A MASK** – Individuals who cannot properly wear a mask are more at risk than individuals who can.

The Monroe County Department of Public Health encourages individuals to consider all of these factors to determine where and when masks will be most beneficial. (*Feb. 22, 2022*)