



COUNTY OF ORANGE – HEALTH CARE AGENCY

PRESS RELEASE

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Local Health Officer Order and Recommendations Updated in Response to COVID-19 State of Emergency Ending With a Request to Observe Masking Requirements in High-Risk Settings

(Santa Ana, CA) –As the California COVID-19 State of Emergency ends and the community returns to business as usual, County Health Officer, **Dr. Regina Chinsio-Kwong** is asking Orange County residents to comply and observe requests to mask if asked in high-risk settings, such as medical provider offices and/or adult and senior care facilities. Staff or patient circumstances may indicate masking is necessary to stay safe from potential exposure in some settings. Preventing the risk of spread of COVID is still important, especially as increasing cases of Long COVID continue to be reported locally.

The updated [Health Officer Order](#) (HOO) has been published for Orange County on Friday, March 24, 2023 and includes a **Strong Recommendation** for the general population to wear a face mask, dependent upon personal risk, and if Orange County is categorized in the medium or high level within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) assessment of COVID-19 Community Level (CCL).

As the State and County of Orange work toward the end of the Federal Public Health Emergency on May 11, 2023, California Health and Human Services, California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have published new guidelines for both the public and health care facilities/providers.

Highlights of Change:

The key areas of change include the following:

1. **COVID-19 Vaccinations** – In alignment with the CDPH Order regarding COVID-19 vaccination requirements for health care, corrections facility, and adult care facilities workers, the County of

Orange HOO changes from Ordered to **Strong Recommendation** for all who are eligible. Some people who are providers and suppliers working with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) are still required to be vaccinated by CMS.

2. **Face Mask** – In alignment with the CDPH Order, which takes effect on April 3, the HOO is updated to include a **Strong Recommendation**, versus Ordered, for certain high-risk settings such as health care settings, correctional facilities, long-term care settings, adult and senior care facilities, homeless shelters and emergency shelters. Additionally, the HOO includes a **Strong Recommendation** for universal masking of visitors/residents and staff in Skilled Nursing Facilities if evidence of facility outbreak exists (two plus cases in residents within a 7-day period).
3. **Isolation of Persons with COVID-19** – It is no longer Ordered but is now **Strongly Recommended** that individuals should isolate for five days and can end after day five provided symptoms are improving, and they are fever-free without fever reducing agents. Wearing a face mask when around others is strongly recommended for a period of 10 days from the onset of symptoms or infection.
4. **Seasonal Flu Vaccination** – The HOO continues to state that Flu Vaccines are **Ordered** for providers of congregate settings, health care providers and emergency responders.
5. **Quarantine** – No longer recommended. Anyone exposed to COVID-19 positive person(s) is **strongly advised** to test on day 3-5 after exposure and monitor for symptoms.

While cases of COVID-19 are declining, COVID-19 continues to adversely affect people in our community. Residents are encouraged to assess their personal health risks and of their loved ones and practice preventive measures to guard against severe illness. Additionally, it is important to know where to access resources as needed.

- **COVID-19 Vaccines:** Studies continue to show that bivalent booster vaccines protect against severe COVID-19 disease and reduce the risk of developing complications such as Long COVID. Vaccination appointments can be scheduled through myturn.ca.gov, www.vaccine.gov and www.ochealthinfo.com or by calling (800) 914-4887.
- **COVID-19 Testing:** Locations for free testing can be searched on [No-Cost COVID-19 Testing locator](#) and individuals can order at www.covidtests.gov or call (800) 232-0233 for support in multiple languages. Individuals with insurance can also order no-cost at home test kits from their service providers.
- **COVID-19 Treatment:** Individuals who do contract COVID-19 are encouraged to seek treatment such as Paxlovid (nirmatrelvir, ritonavir), which can reduce the risk of severe illness if started early. Test to treat locations can be searched [HERE](#).

About the OC Health Care Agency:

The OC Health Care Agency (HCA) is a regional interdisciplinary health jurisdiction and an accredited health department, charged with protecting and promoting individual, family and community health through partnership and coordination of public and private sector resources. Visit www.ochealthinfo.com to learn more about services and resources.

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