



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Counties of Monterey, Napa, San Benito, and Santa Cruz Recommend Indoor Masking in Public Places as Extra Protection Against Increases in COVID-19

Case rates are increasing, especially among unvaccinated individuals.

With cases of COVID-19 rising locally and increased reports of the very infectious Delta variant, the Counties of Monterey, Napa, San Benito, and Santa Cruz recommend that everyone, regardless of vaccination status, wear masks indoors in public places. Out of an abundance of caution, people are recommended to wear masks indoors in places like grocery or retail stores, theaters, and family entertainment centers, even if they are fully vaccinated.

Businesses are urged to adopt universal masking requirements for customers entering indoor areas of their businesses to provide better protection to their employees and customers. This will also make it easier for businesses to be sure unvaccinated people are masked. Workplaces must comply with Cal/OSHA requirements.

The Health Officers of Monterey, Napa, San Benito, and Santa Cruz Counties state that the Delta variants are spreading quickly in this area and that COVID-19 hospitalizations among the unvaccinated are increasing. The Delta variants are easier to pass from person to person. The Health Officers urge everyone to take action to protect themselves and others by getting vaccinated and wearing a mask indoors and in crowded settings. In June, the Delta variants comprised 43 percent of all specimens sequenced in California. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) noted that Delta variants are now responsible for 58 percent of new infections across the country.

Fully vaccinated people are well-protected from infections and serious illness due to COVID-19 including the Delta variants. Vaccinating as many people as possible, as soon as possible, continues to be our best defense against severe COVID-19 infection and the harm it can do to our region. Vaccines are very effective, free, and widely available to everyone 12 years and older. Visit www.myturn.ca.gov or call 2-1-1 to find a vaccination site near you.

In the coming weeks, the Health Officers will revisit the recommendation for everyone to mask indoors in public settings as they continue to monitor transmission rates, hospitalizations, deaths, and increasing vaccination rates throughout the region. Data can be monitored here: <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>.

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