

Illinois Indoor Masking Requirement to End Monday, February 28, 2022

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SPRINGFIELD – Due to the continued decrease in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations, and increase in available ICU beds, the Illinois indoor mask requirement will end Monday, February 28, 2022, at 12:01 a.m. Since the Governor announced his plan to lift the indoor mask requirement, the number of people in the hospital with COVID-19 has been cut in half and the number of ICU beds available increased by 24%. Illinois' weekly COVID-19 case rate has also decreased by 70%,

More than 8 million people in Illinois are fully vaccinated with an average of approximately 16,000 COVID-19 vaccines administered each day, including more than 4,600 first doses daily.

“Throughout this pandemic, we’ve taken action to save lives and keep our economy open – and I’m proud that Illinoisans have done the hard work that has made our state a leader in the Midwest,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “Today, our hospitals are much better positioned to handle emergencies and more than half of all eligible adults have been boosted; this is the progress we needed to make to remove our state indoor masking requirements. As individuals, I encourage everyone to make the best choices going forward to protect your health, along with that of your family and community – and most importantly to treat each other with kindness and compassion.”

“We are now entering the third year of the COVID-19 pandemic and while our focus continues to be on preventing severe illness and ensuring our health care systems aren’t overwhelmed, we are also looking forward to how we will coexist with COVID-19,” said Illinois Department of Public Health Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike. “We each have a role to play in staying healthy and we have many tools that can help protect us from severe illness due to COVID-19. Our tools include readily available safe and effective vaccines, monoclonal antibody and oral antiviral treatments, at-home testing, as well as the personal health actions people can take such as avoiding crowds, hand washing, and continued mask wearing as may be recommended.”

Masks will still be required where federally mandated (including on public transit), health care facilities, congregate settings, long term care facilities, and daycare settings. Additionally, private businesses and municipalities may choose to implement their own masking requirements. Schools are urged to continue following state and federal guidance to help keep students and staff safe in the classroom. The Governor will review the results of lifting the indoor mask mandate before making any announcement regarding the school mask mandate.

In the last four months of 2021 following the reinstatement of Illinois’ mask mandate on August 30, 2021, Illinois had fewer COVID-19 hospitalizations per capita and fewer COVID-19 deaths per capita than the entire Great Lakes region. In the same period, Illinois out-tested the entire Midwest on a per capita basis, providing residents with significantly better access to testing than any of its neighbors. Even with a much greater testing capacity, Illinois saw fewer reported COVID-19 cases per capita during this time than neighbors such as Iowa and Missouri.

Illinois remains a standout in the Midwest for its vaccination rates. Illinois is home to the highest percentage of residents who have received a COVID-19 vaccine as well as the highest percentage of vaccinated and fully vaccinated 5–17-year-olds.

Vaccines continue to be readily available at pharmacies across the state, many local health departments, doctor offices, federally qualified health centers, and other locations. To find a COVID-19 vaccination location near you, go to www.vaccines.gov.

Update on State Deployments for Testing, Vaccines, and Health Care

The State coordinated almost 8,000 mobile vaccination clinics providing more than 243,000 vaccinations to some of our most vulnerable residents (long-term care residents, minority communities, schools, people experiencing homelessness, immigrant communities, and many others). Of those clinics, the State partnered with community groups and non-profits on more than 2,000 clinics with a specific focus on equity and administered more than 86,100 vaccines. Almost 75,000 vaccinations were provided at the more than 2,000 school/youth vaccination clinics. These mobile vaccination clinics are one reason Illinois is a leading state for COVID-19 vaccinations.

Because of the widespread availability of COVID-19 vaccines, the State will begin winding down its mobile vaccination clinics over the next month as federal funding decreases. Schools, organizations, and other groups wanting to host a vaccination clinic should file an application within the coming weeks at <https://dph.illinois.gov/covid19/vaccinationclinics.html>.

During the Delta and Omicron surges the State provided health care staffing support to hospitals and other health care facilities across the state. At the peak of the Omicron surge, Illinois had nearly 3,000 nurses and other health care workers deployed across the state to keep our health care system operating. But as the number of people in hospitals with COVID-19 falls back to pre-surge levels and with federal funding reimbursement for this support ending April 1, the State will draw down its emergency staffing support over the next month and work with our public and private partners as they retake responsibility for their long-term staffing needs.

Testing has also become much more readily available with at-home tests at many pharmacies and the ability to order free COVID-19 tests at covidtest.gov. The 10 state community-based testing sites are currently open three days a week, but as we continue to see the number of cases and the demand for testing decrease - and we head into summer when we've seen the fewest number of cases, hospitalizations, and deaths, mass testing locations will close in favor of more cost-effective testing options.

COVID-19 Treatment Availability

COVID-19 treatments can also help decrease the burden on hospitals. While vaccination and boosting are still the best protection against severe illness due to COVID-19, there are currently two monoclonal antibody treatments, sotrovimab and bebtelovimab, two oral antivirals, Paxlovid and molnupiravir, and a preventive drug, Evusheld, available across Illinois. Talk with your health care provider as soon as possible after testing positive for COVID-19 to see if you are eligible for one of these treatments and to get a prescription. You can use the COVID-19 Outpatient Therapy Locator to find a location to fill your prescription.