

Chatham County Will Ease Mandatory Mask Requirements

By Administrator

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Due to a sharp decline in COVID-19 cases in recent weeks and the wide availability of vaccines, Chatham County will no longer require face coverings in government facilities, unless otherwise designated, beginning March 7, 2022. This decision is in alignment with Governor Roy Cooper's recommendation encouraging local governments and schools to move to voluntary masking except in high-risk environments such as health care facilities, long-term care, public transportation, and congregate living situations.

Overall, 75% of North Carolinians 18 years of age and older have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Of those, 51% have received a booster shot. As of February 18, Chatham County experienced a case rate of 189 case per 100,000 residents and a 10.8% positivity rate. Overall, 58% of the Chatham County population is fully vaccinated.

"We are pleased to see the numbers of cases trending downward; however, it does not mean that COVID-19 is no longer a threat, particularly to the unvaccinated," said Chatham County Manager Dan LaMontagne. "Our ability to remain in a voluntary mask status depends on all of us. We ask that our staff and the public continue to maintain physical distance and take precautions in large gatherings and recognize that everyone's comfort level may not be the same."

As it has throughout the pandemic, Chatham County is adapting its response based on data and the current phase of the virus. Vaccines and boosters are broadly available and have protected millions of people against severe illness, hospitalization, and death. Treatment is available for those at higher risk of severe disease.

"COVID-19 will continue to be with us, but vaccines have saved many lives already and will continue to do so in the future," said Chatham County Public Health Director Mike Zelek. "I hope this recent announcement encourages some out there to get vaccinated and get boosted. Many, including me, will continue to wear masks, especially in crowded indoor settings. That's appropriate and I hope mask-wearing does not become stigmatized as we continue to adapt to the rapidly changing and complex times."