

Public Health Madison and Dane County: Indoor mask requirement remains in place, public health order #15 released

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After a month of stable and improving COVID-19 data, specifically a dramatic increase in vaccination numbers, Public Health Madison & Dane County has issued [Emergency Order #15](#). The order goes into effect April 7 and will be in effect until May 5, 2021.

“We’re happy to take a step forward today, but we cannot let our guard down yet. Please continue to follow the precautions that have gotten us to this moment so we don’t have to go backwards. Everyone should continue to mask up indoors when with people who are not vaccinated and limit close contact with others,” said Janel Heinrich, Director of Public Health Madison & Dane County.

A summary of provisions that changed between Order #14 and Order #15 include:

- Gathering limits outdoors increased.
 - o Outdoor gathering: Numbers must be limited to ensure people who don’t live together can maintain six feet physical distancing at all times.
- Face coverings remain required in indoor public spaces, but face covering requirements for outdoor spaces were removed.
- Schools and childcare policy requirements including distancing and cleaning changed.
- Self-service food stations (e.g., salad bars, buffets, and sampling) may resume.

- Saunas and steam rooms may reopen, with certain provisions.

Indoor gathering and capacity limits are unchanged between Order 14 and Order 15.

“We’re closely watching what’s happening in other states with case counts and hospitalizations ticking up and more infectious variants spreading more broadly. COVID-19 is still circulating, and we are seeing cases and hospitalizations stall instead of decrease here in Dane County so we are proceeding with caution,” continued Heinrich.

Indoor gatherings where food or drink are offered or provided are limited to 150 people or less, not including employees. Indoor gatherings where food or drink are not provided or offered are limited to 350 people or less, not including employees. Numbers must be limited to ensure people can maintain six feet of physical distancing at all times. Businesses are limited to 50% their capacity. Restaurants are limited to 50% their seating capacity, and taverns are limited to 25% their seating capacity.

“National guidance is clear that as we move forward with reopening it’s important to do so in careful, measured steps. The key today is that Dane County’s order keeps the foundational requirements of masking and physical distancing in place, even as our community continues reopening,” said Dane County Executive Joe Parisi.

When Order #14 went into effect on March 10, the seven-day case average was 55, 15 people were hospitalized with COVID-19, and 23.1% of our population had received at least one dose of vaccine. Yesterday, the seven-day case average was 51, 20 people were hospitalized with COVID-19, and 39.2% of the Dane County population has received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Track the latest data via the weekly [Data Snapshot](#) and [Data Notes blog post](#).

“We are all excited to get back to doing activities we love and have missed over the past year. As restrictions continue to be loosened and you consider which activities you want to pick up again, keep in mind all activities contain some risk,” said Satya Rhodes-Conway, City of Madison Mayor. “You and your family may decide you feel comfortable with certain risks, while your neighbors may not. Now is a great time to communicate our boundaries and comfort around risks to those we spend time with.”

It is still safest to:

- Limit your contact with people you don't live with.
- Wear a mask when you are with people you don't live with (certain exceptions apply with people who are fully vaccinated).
- Maintain six feet of distance from people you don't live with (certain exceptions apply with people who are fully vaccinated).
- Limit the activities you engage in on a daily or weekly basis.
- Spend time outdoors, where the virus can more easily disperse in open air.
- Get vaccinated as soon as you are able.

“Public Health Orders save lives. Keeping these precautions in place continues to prioritize the health and safety of the community and will continue to be important until more people are able to be vaccinated,” said Jerry Halverson, MD, Chair of the Board of Health.

See the [full order](#) for all details.