

COVID-19: Considerations for Fully Vaccinated Individuals

BACKGROUND

COVID-19 spreads when an infected person breathes out droplets and very small particles that contain the virus. These droplets and particles can be breathed in by other people, or land on their eyes, noses, or mouth. In some circumstances, they may contaminate surfaces they touch. People who are closer than 6 feet from the infected person are most likely to get infected.

Current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [guidance](#) for individuals fully vaccinated against COVID-19 indicates that fully vaccinated people can resume activities they did before the pandemic. This includes returning to activities without wearing a mask or physically distancing, except where required by federal, state, local tribal, or territorial law, rules, and regulations, including local business and workplace guidelines.

While COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective in preventing COVID-19 disease, especially severe illness and death, and they reduce the risk of people spreading COVID-19, Central District Health (CDH) recognizes *there are many environments where wearing a mask and physically distancing continue to be the safest measures for everyone.*

As we navigate returning to many of our pre-pandemic norms, CDH wants to remind people to make their own health and safety assessments that are both in their personal best interest and respectful and in the best interest of those around them. This guidance aims to provide considerations and resources for use in determining whether continued measures like masking and physical distancing might be the safest choices in conjunction with being fully vaccinated.

Note: Information addressed in this document does not apply in [healthcare settings](#), [correctional/detention settings](#), [homeless shelters](#) and schools.

What does it mean to be fully vaccinated?

In general, people are considered fully vaccinated:

- 2 weeks after their second dose in a 2-dose series, such as the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or
- 2 weeks after a single-dose vaccine, such as Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine

If you don't meet these requirements, regardless of your age, you are NOT fully vaccinated. Keep taking all [precautions](#) until you are fully vaccinated.

If you have a condition or are taking medications that weaken your immune system, you may NOT be fully protected even if you are fully vaccinated. Talk to your healthcare provider. Even after vaccination, you may need to continue taking all precautions.

Consideration: Gatherings

Gatherings, especially large ones, continue to be higher-risk environments given that people share air with those around them and often for long durations of time. When multiple groups of people mix and vaccination status is unknown, it can greatly increase risk of exposure. When gathering with others, consider who is in the mix – might there be people who are unvaccinated or immunocompromised and at a higher risk? Are there kids present who are unable to receive vaccine due to their age? What duration of time are you spending among a group of people and how close are you to them? When there is the potential for people with varying risk levels and levels of protection to mix, wearing a mask and maintaining physical distancing are valuable ways to help protect yourself and those you are around in a group setting.

Risk is greatly reduced in outdoor settings, but actions like talking loudly over music or noise, people singing, shouting or cheering, and close quarters all increase risk whether or not you are fully vaccinated. Anyone who is unvaccinated in a group setting should practice all precautions, which include wearing a mask and maintaining physical distancing.

- Read CDH's Guidance for [Safer Spring & Summer Gatherings](#)

Consideration: Varying community vaccination rates

Whether you are traveling around or outside of Idaho, or moving throughout the community you live in, consider the current COVID-19 vaccination rates. A community's vaccination rate is one helpful indicator in determining potential risk for COVID-19 exposure.

Remember, in the U.S., COVID-19 vaccines are not yet authorized for kids under the age of 12, which makes for a gap among this younger population. For those 12 and older, COVID-19 vaccine is in abundant supply, free of cost, and offered on a walk-in basis through many healthcare providers.

- To view COVID-19 vaccination rates in Idaho, view the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare's vaccine data dashboard, https://public.tableau.com/views/COVID-19VaccineDataDashboard/LandingPage?:language=en&:display_count=y&publish=yes&:origin=viz_share_link
- To view vaccination rates throughout the U.S., visit <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#vaccinations>.
- To find a vaccine location in Ada, Boise, Elmore or Valley Counties, visit <https://www.cdh.idaho.gov/covid-vaccine.php>

Consideration: Those unable to be vaccinated

Outside of personal choice, there may be reasons people are not vaccinated for COVID-19. For instance, vaccines are not currently authorized for use in children under the age of 12 in the United States. Additionally, some people with certain chronic diseases that put them at higher risk for severe COVID-19 illness may be unable to receive vaccine based on guidance from their healthcare provider. For these reasons, masking and physical distancing may be in the best interest to protect both you and the unvaccinated person you are interacting with.

- Those at elevated risk of severe disease and/or immunocompromised should talk with their healthcare provider and likely continue to wear a mask during interactions with those outside of their immediate household.

Consideration: Varying community transmission rates

Whether you are traveling around or outside of Idaho, or moving throughout the community you live in, consider the current COVID-19 transmission rates. A community's transmission rate is one helpful indicator in determining potential risk for COVID-19 exposure.

- View levels of community transmission at <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>

Consideration: New variants are circulating

While information so far indicates the currently authorized COVID-19 vaccines provide protection from severe COVID-19 illness, more is still being learned about to what extent.

The new variants seem to spread more easily and quickly than other variants, which may lead to more cases of COVID-19. An increase in the number of cases will put more strain on health care resources, lead to more hospitalizations, and potentially more deaths. So far, studies suggest that the current authorized vaccines work on the circulating variants. Scientists will continue to study these and other variants. In the meantime, you can take steps to protect yourself by getting a COVID-19 vaccine, wearing a mask around others, using physical distancing, avoiding crowds and poorly ventilated indoor spaces, and washing your hands often with soap and water.

- To learn more about variants identified in Idaho residents, select the *Laboratory Testing* option at <https://public.tableau.com/profile/idaho.division.of.public.health#!/vizhome/DPHIdahoCOVID-19Dashboard/Home>
- To learn more about variants being identified throughout the U.S., visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/transmission/variant.html>

Consideration: The workplace

Whether or not employees are fully vaccinated, your workplace may choose to implement specific requirements around mask wearing and other safety measures. Businesses should clearly communicate any changes in requirements to employees and make expectations clear for anyone who enters your building (e.g.: the public/customers/clients/visitors). Businesses are encouraged to continue offering virtual meeting attendance as an option. If your workplace allows for vaccinated employees to not wear masks, ensure there is no stigma associated with mask wearing – regardless of vaccine status. Consider how you will encourage and/or enforce unvaccinated team members to wear a mask.

Employees should work with their human resources point of contact or manager regarding any questions or concerns they might have around workplace health and safety requirements.

- Learn more about workplace guidance and strategies at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/workplaces-businesses/index.html>

Consideration: You may be most comfortable continuing to wear a mask and physically distancing in public

Wearing a mask and physically distancing from those outside of your household, have become our norms during this pandemic. Because of this, some may choose to continue with these effective measures to protect themselves and their loved ones. Choosing to wear a mask does not signal a person's vaccination status. While current guidance allows fully vaccinated individuals to opt not to wear a mask in public, it remains recommended that anyone not fully vaccinated wear a mask and practice all [precautions](#) around those outside of their household. Exercise kindness and respect toward anyone using these effective protection measures.

RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

- CDC's [Choosing Safer Activities](#) – includes an infographic for vaccinated and unvaccinated people
- [CDC's Key Things to Know about COVID-19 Vaccines – What we know & what we're still learning](#)
- [CDC: Emotional Well-Being Resources](#)
- [Central District Health's COVID-19 webpage directory](#)
- [State of Idaho Coronavirus Website \(& data dashboards\)](#)