

March 2022 COVID-19 Update

Entering a New Phase of the Pandemic

With declining COVID-19 infection rates and hospitalizations, Washington, Oregon, and California jointly announced [lifting](#) indoor mask requirements. Starting March 12th, face masks will no longer be required in most indoor settings, including K-12 schools and childcare facilities. Masks will still be required in health care settings such as hospitals, outpatient and dental offices, long term care settings, and correctional facilities.

Businesses and local governments can choose to implement vaccination or face mask requirements for workers or customers, and school districts can still choose to have students and teachers wear masks. Federal law requires face masks in certain settings such as public transportation and school buses. Employers are still required to notify workers of potential exposures when a co-worker has a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19. In worksites with 50 or more employees, outbreaks of 10 or more confirmed cases must be reported to the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries. Employers must also allow workers to wear masks if they choose.

Governor Inslee previously announced the mask requirement would end on March 23rd. “We’ve continued to monitor data from our state Department of Health, and have determined we are able to adjust the timing of our statewide mask requirement. While this represents another step forward for Washingtonians, we must still be mindful that many within our communities remain vulnerable. Many businesses and families will continue choosing to wear masks, because we’ve learned how effective they are at keeping one another safe. As we transition to this next phase, we will continue to move forward together carefully and cautiously.”

King County Ends Vaccination Verification Requirement

King County announced it is ending the local health order requiring proof of COVID-19 vaccination or a negative test for entry into restaurants and bars, indoor recreational events and establishments, and outdoor events as of March 1st. Businesses and organizations may continue to implement their own vaccination verification rules for their establishments.

King County Executive Dow Constantine said, “From the beginning of this pandemic, our aim has been to ensure all policies protect the health of our community and save lives. Our health experts believe now is the appropriate time to lift vaccine verification requirements so I will continue to follow their lead. It’s a hopeful sign that we are moving in the right direction, and can continue taking additional steps towards recovery. King County businesses and community members were instrumental in helping to shape this vaccination verification policy and I’m grateful for everyone’s extra effort to keep our community safe over these last several months.”

County and City of Seattle leaders announced the repeal of the vaccination verification policy at a press conference on February 16, 2022. A full transcript of the press conference is available [here](#).