What are the current masking requirements if you’re fully vaccinated?

If you’re fully vaccinated, you can go back to doing most of the things you did before the pandemic, including no longer wearing a mask, with some exceptions. Even if you’re fully vaccinated, you must still wear a mask:

- If a business establishment, organization, or other entity requires it
- Indoors in schools and child care settings
- In healthcare settings like hospitals, doctors’ offices, home-based healthcare, and nursing homes
- On public transportation like planes, buses, and trains
- When providing or using paid ground transportation services
- In transportation hubs like airports and stations
- In enclosed or semi-enclosed transit stops and waiting areas
- In homeless shelters
- In correctional facilities
- When required by other applicable state or federal laws or regulations

Learn what else changes when you’re fully vaccinated at covid.ri.gov/prevention.

What does it mean to be fully vaccinated?

Fully vaccinated means you’ve gotten all recommended doses of a COVID-19 vaccine authorized by the United States (US) Food and Drug Administration (FDA) or World Health Organization (WHO) and more than 14 days have passed since the final dose.

What if I’m not fully vaccinated?

You must continue to wear a mask indoors in public. To best protect others, RIDOH recommends staying at least three feet away indoors from people you don’t live with even while wearing a mask.

Can I still catch and transmit COVID-19 if I’m fully vaccinated?

If you’re fully vaccinated, there’s a very small chance you can still catch COVID-19 and an even smaller chance you can transmit it.

What’s considered a healthcare setting?

A healthcare setting is any place where healthcare is provided. This includes but is not limited to acute care facilities (such as hospitals, urgent care centers, emergency departments, etc.), extended stay rehabilitation facilities, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, home-based healthcare, vehicles where
healthcare is delivered (such as mobile clinics), and outpatient facilities such as dialysis centers, physician offices, and others.

**Do I need to carry proof of vaccination with me?**

No, but businesses, organizations, and other entities – including government entities – can require you to show proof of vaccination. For this reason, it’s a good idea to carry official proof you are fully vaccinated.

**What type of vaccination proof should I show to businesses or accept from customers?**

You may choose to carry a physical or digital copy of your vaccination record in case you are asked to show evidence of vaccination. The official COVID-19 vaccination verification documents available in Rhode Island at this time are:

- Your COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card
- A printed or digital photo of the front and back of your COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card
- A printed copy or screenshot of your COVID-19 vaccination record page from Rhode Island’s Vaccine Record Lookup Portal at [portal.ri.gov/VaccineRecord](https://portal.ri.gov/VaccineRecord)

**I run a business. Do I have to require proof of vaccination of my customers?**

No, but you can choose to implement it as a policy. If you would like to require proof of vaccination from customers or employees but are unsure about any legal issues, please consult with your legal team. Businesses may also choose to seek guidance from their merchants’ association, chamber of commerce, or industry association.

**Does requiring proof of vaccination violate the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule?**

No. HIPAA prohibits health plans, healthcare clearinghouses, and healthcare providers that electronically transmit any health information related to transactions for which HHS has adopted standards from releasing personal health information to third parties.

**I run a business. What do current masking laws mean for my employees and customers who are fully vaccinated and for those who are not fully vaccinated?**

You and your employees and customers must follow all requirements of [Executive Order 21-69](https://www.governor.ri.gov/orders/executive-order-21-69) and the [Safe Activities Regulations](https://portal.ri.gov/SafeActivities). As a business owner, you are allowed to have your own masking and physical distancing policy for your employees and customers that is stricter than Executive Order 21-69. This means you can require employees and customers to wear masks and physically distance while at your place of business whether or not they’re fully vaccinated. The State requires that business establishments, organizations, and other entities clearly communicate screening, masking, and physical distancing requirements at the entrance of their buildings to clarify policies that differ from State requirements. Download [required signage](https://portal.ri.gov) at Reopening RI.
Do I still have to wear a mask outdoors?

No, except when required by a business establishment, organization, or other entity. Unvaccinated people are still strongly encouraged to wear masks in crowded outdoor settings or during activities that involve close contact with other people who are not fully vaccinated. This applies to all ages and settings, including outdoor live performances, youth sports, and summer camps.

What is considered close contact?

Close contact means you’ve been within six feet of someone with COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more in a 24-hour period.

Does wearing a mask help prevent the spread of COVID-19?

Yes, wearing a mask helps prevent the spread of COVID-19. Mask wearing may be especially effective at preventing COVID-19 transmission in indoor and enclosed settings where air circulation and ventilation are limited and air droplets carrying the virus can hang in the air, thereby increasing the risk of transmission.

Do masks limit oxygen intake by people exerting energy, like those playing a sport?

Studies on the effects of wearing masks have shown there is no change in oxygen or carbon dioxide levels when people wear cloth and surgical masks while resting and exercising. The studies included healthy hospital workers, older adults, and adults with COPD. Although sometimes uncomfortable, masks were found to be safe even when exercising.

Is there a risk to wearing a mask and playing sports in the heat?

Some people may report feeling increased shortness of breath or claustrophobic while exercising with a mask in the heat. Coaches and athletes should consider modifying the intensity of their exercise when masked, particularly in the heat. Heat health warnings may be an important tool, along with athletes and coaches being alert for signs of heat-related illness.

Mask Wearing and Children

Is wearing a mask dangerous to a child’s health?

If you have concerns about whether masking may negatively affect your child’s health, check in with your pediatrician or primary care provider. Masks should not be worn by children younger than age two, anyone who has trouble breathing, or anyone who is unable to remove the mask without help.

Are PreK-12 students able to take off their masks while outside?

Schools and child care providers can allow students and staff to remove their mask outdoors.
Why has Rhode Island not dropped the mask mandate for children when nearby states like Massachusetts and Connecticut have dropped theirs?

Rhode Island continues to closely monitor CDC recommendations for mask wearing among youth. The CDC continues to recommend that young, unvaccinated children wear masks indoors, especially in school settings. RIDOH will continue to monitor further guidance released by the CDC in the coming weeks and months.

Do unvaccinated children really pose a health risk to others if they are not wearing masks?

Yes, unvaccinated children are at risk for getting COVID-19 and transmitting it to others who come in close contact with them, including people who may be more vulnerable to severe disease. Wearing a mask and physical distancing both reduce the risk of transmission.

What is the rationale for excluding schools as a place where masks can be removed indoors if someone is vaccinated?

The CDC recommends that schools and other settings focused on children continue to follow masking guidelines. This is primarily because most children age 12-15 are not yet fully vaccinated and children younger than age 12 cannot yet be vaccinated. These groups are still at risk for getting and transmitting COVID-19 to others, including those who may be more vulnerable to severe disease.