



CITY of NORTHAMPTON
PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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**Northampton Board of Health Ends COVID-19 Public Health Emergency;
Lifts All Emergency Restrictions Effective May 29, 2021**

NORTHAMPTON - Today the Northampton Health Department announced that effective Saturday, May 29th, 2021 the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency in Northampton will end. As of this date, all COVID-19 related Emergency orders issued on behalf of the Northampton Board of Health will be rescinded and the Director of Public Health will no longer be authorized to execute emergency orders on behalf of the Board of Health. These decisions were reached at the May 20, 2021 meeting of the Northampton Board of Health.

This effective date coincides with actions taken by Massachusetts Governor Baker that lift all remaining COVID-19 restrictions in Massachusetts, including the face mask order with some exceptions where face coverings will continue to be mandated. Exceptions include: healthcare facilities, congregate care settings, shared transportation and public transportation, Pre-K, elementary, and secondary education settings with the exception of outdoor activities such as recess, physical education, and extracurricular sports. Detailed information about the revised face-covering mandate can be found here:

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-mask-requirements>

The most recent CDC guidelines advise individuals who have been fully vaccinated — meaning it's been two weeks since your second dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine, or since your one-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine — do not need to wear a mask in most settings, with some exceptions.

These guidelines do not apply to people who are not vaccinated. People who have not received any COVID-19 vaccination should continue to wear masks in most public set COVID-19. This guidance is also in place to protect others around them, especially those who are also not vaccinated and therefore at risk.

Director of Public Health Merridith O'Leary cautions that while it is currently permissible in many situations to remove your mask, it is a personal choice each person must make according to what is best for their own comfort and health situation. Some vaccinated people should still take precautions and keep their masks on - particularly those with severe immunosuppression. If you are a transplant patient on immunosuppression medications or have cancer and are on chemotherapy, you should still keep your mask on and keep distancing in public places where people around you could be unvaccinated and unmasked.

COVID-19 continues to be a reportable disease. All workplaces, businesses, food service establishments, healthcare settings, schools, and institutes of higher education are required to report all cases of COVID-19 to their local board of health and are required to comply with contact tracing efforts.

While COVID-19 restrictions will no longer be in effect, individuals are encouraged to continue to observe and follow advised best practices:

- Get the COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available to you. All individuals who are 12 years of age or older are eligible to receive the COVID vaccine in Massachusetts. You may find a vaccine appointment by searching your location on <https://vaxfinder.mass.gov/>.
- Stay home and seek testing when ill with new symptoms. If you test negative for COVID-19, continue to stay home until symptoms have been resolved for at least 24 hours.
- Wear a securely fitting face covering when unable to maintain at least six feet of distance from individuals who do not live in your household, especially when indoors.
- If gathering with friends and family outside of your household, smaller gatherings and outdoor gatherings reduce the risk for transmission of COVID-19 and other illnesses. Avoid congregating in large groups and in small, poorly-ventilated spaces.
- If traveling out of state for a time period over 24 hours, unvaccinated individuals are advised to quarantine, or obtain a COVID-19 test upon arrival to Massachusetts or within 72 hours prior to return.

The decline in COVID-19 cases and the resultant removal of these restrictions is a product of the ongoing efforts of Massachusetts and Northampton residents in promoting public health. We want to thank everyone who has done their part by wearing face coverings, social distancing, staying home when ill, quarantining when exposed, and getting vaccinated when eligible. None of these are small tasks, and together they can and have presented extraordinary challenges. It is therefore an understatement to say that we appreciate and admire this collective accomplishment by our community.

We look forward to this well-deserved next step toward our 'new normal' world where we all know how to respond to serious public health emergencies, and have a greater awareness about how all infections spread throughout our community. It is the hope of the Northampton Board of Health that we emerge from this pandemic as a community and nation with the knowledge and skills to prevent future infectious disease from having such a profound effect on our society, and that together we will continue to build toward a safe and healthy future.

For more information, contact Merridith O'Leary at 413-587-1215 or moleary@northamptonma.gov