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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**COVID-19 Update: Masking Recommendations for Lake County Residents**  
*Local Transmission Consistent with CDC's High Risk (Red Tier) Criteria at this Time*

**LAKE COUNTY, CA (March 1, 2022)** – Adaptability is a cornerstone of Public Health policy; we seek to follow the data, adhere to the best available science, and make recommendations and decisions that reflect the available information. We are transitioning from public policies based on mandates to strong, data-informed recommendations.

As Lake County's Public Health Officer and a physician, I recognize masking is one of the most effective ways to combat outbreaks of respiratory illness, including COVID-19. I strongly encourage use of masks in schools, daycare settings, and any place people gather. Mask use decreases COVID transmission, saves lives and eases the burden on our already-taxed healthcare system.

The following resources can help Lake County residents make informed, healthy decisions.

**New CDC Guidance Describes Three Tiers of Preventive Measures Based on "COVID-19 Community Levels"**

Currently, Lake County is in the "High" category (*Red Tier*) of both the CDC's newly released guidelines on "COVID-19 Community Levels" and their "Community Transmission" metrics. More information is available here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/community-levels.html>

[https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view?list\\_select\\_state=California&data-type=Risk&list\\_select\\_county=6033](https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view?list_select_state=California&data-type=Risk&list_select_county=6033)

**With Lake County in the CDC's High Tier, What Prevention Steps Should I Take?**

Precautions are strongly recommended by the CDC for Counties with high levels of current COVID risk:

- Wear a mask in indoor public settings (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/masks.html>)
- Get vaccinated and stay current with booster doses (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html>)
- Feeling sick? Get tested: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/testing/diagnostic-testing.html>
- Additional precautions are recommended for people at high risk of severe illness: [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/community-levels.html#anchor\\_47145](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/community-levels.html#anchor_47145)

The CDC further advises, "People may choose to mask at any time. People with symptoms, a positive test or exposure to someone with COVID-19 should wear a mask."

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>

**Changes to Statewide Face Covering Requirements**

As of today, March 1, unvaccinated individuals are no longer required to wear masks in all public indoor settings in California. Instead, all individuals, regardless of vaccination Status, are strongly recommended to continue indoor masking. Unless specifically exempt, all individuals remain required to mask in certain settings considered higher risk (*healthcare and long-term care settings, adult and senior care facilities, emergency and homeless shelters and cooling and heating centers, correctional facilities and detention centers, and on public transit*).

Masking likewise remains required in indoor County government facilities in Lake County at this time. Neighboring Mendocino County still requires masking in all indoor public settings.

#### *What About Kids in School?*

Ensuring children have access to a safe learning environment is a major goal of Public Health. After March 11, the statewide mandate for universal masking in K-12 schools and childcare settings will end. However, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), “**Strongly recommends** that individuals in these settings continue to mask in indoor settings when the [mandate] ends.” School Districts can place stricter requirements. Please continue to follow communications from your school, for updates on their policies and recommendations.

#### *Businesses and Work Settings?*

Businesses may still choose to require all patrons to wear masks, and are encouraged to continue providing information on recommended precautions; this is particularly important when community transmission is high. In workplaces, Cal/OSHA guidance still applies. Find information and updates here: <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/coronavirus/>

Updated CDPH Guidance: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/guidance-for-face-coverings.aspx>

#### **Be Kind and Protect Each Other – Masking is Strongly Encouraged**

Respecting the decisions of others, and recognition of their desire to wear a mask or forego a mask is important, particularly during this transition period; there are many reasons why an individual may choose to wear a mask.

COVID-19 transmission remains high in Lake County’s communities. This is not the time to let our guard down. Take care of your neighbors. Protect each other, your families and our communities. Masking is one protective measure in our COVID-19 toolbox. The use of masks is strongly encouraged as long as Lake County remains in the High Tier.

Erik McLaughlin, MD, MPH

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