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OHA recommends universal mask use for all public indoor settings

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OHA recommends universal mask use for all public indoor settings

In response to a large jump in cases and hospitalizations and new national guidance calling for masking measures to prevent the spread of the highly transmissible Delta variant, the Oregon Health Authority today is recommending universal mask use in public indoor settings throughout the state to protect Oregonians from COVID-19.

"Today's reported sharp rise in cases and hospitalizations in Oregon are sobering reminders that the pandemic is not over, especially for Oregonians who remain unvaccinated," said Dr. Dean Sidelinger, state epidemiologist and state health officer.

"The highly contagious Delta variant has increased tenfold in the past two weeks in Oregon, and it is now estimated to be associated with 80% of the new cases in Oregon. The use of face masks provides significant protection for individuals who are unvaccinated as well as an additional level protection from a small but known risk of infection by the virus for persons who have already been vaccinated."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), people who are vaccinated with currently available vaccines are protected from the virus and the circulating variants, including the Delta variant that is now seen in the majority of Oregon's new cases.

OHA's recommendation aligns with the CDC's new guidance issued today that everyone, including fully vaccinated persons, wear a mask in public indoor settings. OHA's recommendation applies statewide, and not just areas with higher infections and high transmission, as cases have increased across the state in recent weeks due to the Delta variant.

OHA is continuing to call on local community and public health leaders, and businesses, to encourage vaccination and masking to prevent new outbreaks in areas of substantial and high transmission.

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