

New Bedford Health Department recommends wearing masks at indoor gatherings

Based on the guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued earlier this week to slow the spread of COVID-19, the New Bedford Health Department recommends following the CDC's guidelines for wearing masks at indoor gatherings.

In the Interim Public Health Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People, issued on Tuesday, July 27, 2021, the CDC recommended that fully vaccinated people, in addition to unvaccinated people, wear a mask in public indoor settings in areas of substantial or high transmission, which includes most counties in the United States and several counties in Massachusetts, including Bristol County. Those who are immunocompromised or at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19, or with members of their household who are immunocompromised, at increased risk for severe illness, or unvaccinated, are also recommended to wear a mask in such settings.

The CDC added a recommendation for fully vaccinated people who have a known exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 to be tested 3-5 days after exposure, and to wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days or until they receive a negative test result, which the Health Department also advises.

While school is out of session for summer vacation, New Bedford Public Schools is closely monitoring the evolving guidelines on mask use from the CDC and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The district will announce any guidelines before the school year begins. Vaccinations provide protection against COVID-19, and are

available conveniently throughout New Bedford. While the vaccines protect against serious illness and the vast majority of vaccinated individuals are protected from contracting the virus, preliminary evidence suggests that fully vaccinated people can spread the Delta variant of the virus, especially to individuals who are not yet vaccinated.

The New Bedford Health Department also recommends that unvaccinated people avoid all indoor gatherings where people are unmasked. Vaccinations are strongly recommended, as they are the most effective tool to prevent serious illness, hospitalization, and death for those who contract the COVID-19 virus.

“With the emergence of the Delta variant, which is far more contagious than other strains of COVID-19, it is more important than ever to do everything we can to prevent the spread of the virus – starting with getting vaccinated,” said Mayor Jon Mitchell. “Because of high transmission rates in Massachusetts, we are also recommending the wearing of masks indoors where people gather, whether they are vaccinated or not, to stem the spread of COVID. Residents who are not vaccinated should keep their distance from others, especially those who are not masked or vaccinated, and should avoid indoor gatherings.”

Damon Chaplin, Director of Public Health, said, “Over the last few weeks we have seen clusters and cases increase in New Bedford. To protect ourselves, our loved ones and those who are not eligible to receive vaccines, it is important for the community to follow protective recommendations from the CDC, as we continue to monitor the situation closely. Wear a mask indoors, avoid large events and most importantly, get vaccinated. Getting the COVID-19 vaccine is the single most important action you can take to protect yourself and your loved ones.”