



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on August 26, 2021

## Oregon Imposes Outdoor Mask Mandate Regardless of COVID Vaccination Status

First in the nation, Oregon will require adults and most children regardless of their vaccination status to wear face masks in outdoor public settings where people are close to each other, starting Friday.

Contrary to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [guidelines](#) stating that it is unnecessary to wear masks outdoors, Oregon Governor Kate Brown [announced](#) the new rule Tuesday, saying masks are a “quick and simple tool we can immediately deploy to protect ourselves and our families,” which “have proven to be effective at bringing case counts down.”



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While the rule does not apply to outdoor gatherings at private residences, where people from different households meet and cannot maintain physical distance, the masks are strongly recommended to be used in such settings.

The requirement provides for specific exceptions, “such as two individuals walking by one another on a trail or in a park.”

Additionally, those exempted include children under the age of five; individuals who are eating, drinking, or sleeping; and homeless people. Those playing or practicing competitive sports or engaged in an activity in which it is not feasible to wear a mask, such as swimming, and performers singing or delivering speeches, may forgo masks as well. Oregon’s K-12 schools, where anyone older than two must wear a mask indoors under a separate order the governor issued in July, are not subject to the new outdoor mask rule either.

Governor Brown stated that “the combination of vaccines and masks is the most powerful way we can fight this latest surge of COVID-19 and save lives,” while praising the Pfizer vaccine getting full Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval.

[Oregon](#) is one of the nation’s most vaccinated states, where 65.9 percent of the residents are fully vaccinated, and 71.6 percent have received at least one dose. Yet, despite being heavily vaxxed, the Beaver State has seen a sharp surge in cases, as Brown herself [complained](#) about during the announcement of the new requirement. Brown did not mention any breakthrough infections, but blamed unvaccinated people for the recent uptick.

State Health Officer Dr. Dean Sidelinger praised the outdoor mask mandate, saying people infected with Delta strain “have one thousand times more virus in their nose,” which makes it easier to pass to others. Dr. Sidelinger also remarked that surges in cases are usually linked to major public events, which facilitate the spread of the virus. Sidelinger seemingly referred to the recently [reported](#) COVID outbreak at Oregon’s Pendleton Whisky Music Fest, after which 66 out of 1,200 attendees tested positive for COVID. Five of the infected were reportedly fully vaccinated. University of Denver aerosol



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scientist Alex Huffman [remarked](#) at the time that standing beside an infected person long enough — even for 10 minutes — could expose someone to a “tremendous viral load.”

Since it is claimed that only unvaccinated people are at risk of getting seriously ill with COVID or die from it, and vaccinated people are spared from those risks, it seems unreasonable to require all people to wear masks outdoors, yet many “experts” believe one can not be too cautious when it comes to Delta variant. Even though he is fully vaccinated, Ali Mokdad, a University of Washington epidemiologist, [says](#) he still puts on a mask as a “simple precaution to avoid infection” before crossing paths with another person while hiking on nature trails. Jessica Malaty Rivera, an infectious disease epidemiologist, [believes](#) that “Erring on the side of caution doesn’t hurt anybody,” and that “wearing masks [outdoors] does not deny the effectiveness of these vaccines.”

*OregonLive* [reports](#) that the mandate takes effect the same day as the start of the Oregon State Fair, which runs through Labor Day and expects to see some 350,000 guests. Then, there is a Hood to Coast Relay race that also starts Friday. September also promises to be eventful. The Pendleton Round-up, a major annual rodeo that gathers tens of thousands of fans, will take place on September 11-18. Finally, University of Oregon and Oregon State University will be hosting their first home football games of the season, which are widely popular.

Earlier this month, in preparation for the Oregon State Beavers’ first football game scheduled for early September, Oregon’s Benton County commissioners [voted](#) to require everyone age five and up to wear masks at outdoor gatherings where social distancing is not possible. While Benton County’s decision was inspirational for Governor Brown, the other counties did not rush to follow suit, so now all of them are covered by Brown’s requirement, which, arguably, is not backed by science.

The reported data [suggests](#) the outdoor transmission rate may be less than one percent, and may be below 0.1 percent.

Moreover, [according](#) to Mises Institute, during the pandemic, the 10 states with the highest rate of mask usage have been doing worse in both cases and deaths than the 10 states with the lowest rate of mask usage. The institute notes, “If we are assuming fairly consistent rates of mask usage across the entire duration of the pandemic while also assuming that the science behind masks is truly settled, it’s quite difficult to explain away any period of time in which states with the lowest rates of mask usage were outperforming states with the highest rates.”



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