



## **Mendocino County Public Health Department**

*Healthy People, Healthy Communities*

**Dr. Andrew Coren, County Health Officer**



# **Press Release**

*Not for op-ed*

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Date: March 4, 2022

### **Letter to Mendocino County from Health Officer, Andy Coren, MD**

Today, March 4, 2022, Mendocino County Public Health is lifting the universal indoor mask mandate. This is happening now because COVID-19 infections have fallen dramatically in the last 2 months of the Omicron surge, and the stress on our hospitals is coming under control. I will discuss more details on this afternoon's [Public Health Media Day at 2 PM](#).

Yet the CDC shows that we are in a HIGH TRANSMISSION community where wearing masks indoors is STILL STRONGLY RECOMMENDED at this time.

So why lift the mask order now? Because our community has learned and continues to learn to cope with the pandemic.

While we are all happy to have made this progress it is important to know that we are not done with COVID-19. We expect that there will be more surges in the future. Another more contagious variant is already spreading through the world and more are expected. So, it is NOT OK to go without a mask to most indoor public spaces.

Also important is to acknowledge how much we have learned in such a short time. This has been a very difficult 2 years, with almost a million deaths due to infection in the USA alone, over 120 souls lost in Mendocino County, with many more sickened and some continuing with symptoms of Long Covid. Health systems were overwhelmed, businesses closed, organizations, schools, and recreation were all affected. We do not want to repeat that experience. But we cannot turn back the clocks.

Our community has learned the advantages of masking, vaccinating, increased ventilation and distancing, which have gotten us to this point. And we must pass this on to our children to learn, just as we teach them other ways to protect themselves, without being ashamed or bullied for doing what is right for themselves and the most vulnerable members of our community.

So, as we go forward we have to be aware of our health risks and intelligently respond. Public health organizations from CDC to CDPH to our local Mendocino County Department of Public Health exist to investigate and inform us of the risks we face and how best to protect ourselves. Speed limits, seatbelts, avoiding tobacco, testing for cancer, protecting our children with vaccines, and other advisories are researched carefully before making recommendations or laws. And they have saved millions of lives.

And Public Health is continuing to learn through research in the laboratories and the field. Research takes time. To protect ourselves against COVID, advice has included getting vaccinated, increasing activities outdoors and improving ventilation indoors including distancing when practical. It also includes masking. As uncomfortable as they are, they save lives. The California Department of Public Health has taken the lessons of the past 2 years and created the SMARTER plan (Shots, Masks, Awareness [to protect ourselves], Readiness, Testing, Education [keeping schools open], & Rx [new medications]) to go forward.

Also, please remember that by federal and California state laws, masks are still required for everyone in some settings such as public transit and health care facilities. Masks are still strongly recommended in indoor settings for all at this time, especially if you are unvaccinated or if you have medical conditions that put you or your household at increased risk.

Thank you Mendocino County, for your continued hard work in fighting this pandemic.

Mendocino County Health Officer Dr. Andy Coren