

NEWS BRIEF

Mask Guidelines Unchanged Even as Delta Variant Spreads

On Wednesday, June 30, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced it would not update mask guidelines even as the delta variant of COVID-19 spreads across the country.

The CDC's position is that fully vaccinated individuals don't need to wear masks, even in light of the delta variant.

The delta variant (first detected in India) is a highly infectious form of COVID-19. It's so infectious that the World Health Organization (WHO) is urging everyone—even those vaccinated—to continue wearing masks.

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"[Mask policies are] not to protect the vaccinated, they're to protect the unvaccinated."

- CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky

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The biggest concern with the delta variant and vaccinated individuals isn't their health—it's that they can unwittingly help transmit the disease.

As such, the CDC acknowledges that individual localities may deem it prudent to enforce their own mask policies on a local level—particularly in areas with low vaccination rates.

Overall, however, the United States has a relatively high vaccination rate, meaning much of the country isn't at immediate risk from the delta variant.

Moreover, the CDC emphasizes that current COVID-19 vaccines are effective at protecting against the delta variant.

"If you are vaccinated, you are safe from the variants that are circulating here in the United States," the CDC director said in an interview.

What's next?

Effectively, nothing has changed for employers—there is no new guidance from the CDC.

However, employers with in-person staff should be prepared for employee concerns regarding their health and the delta variant as it continues making headlines. Employers, especially those with many unvaccinated workers, may consider their own safeguards or policies to help reduce employee fears.



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