



News Release

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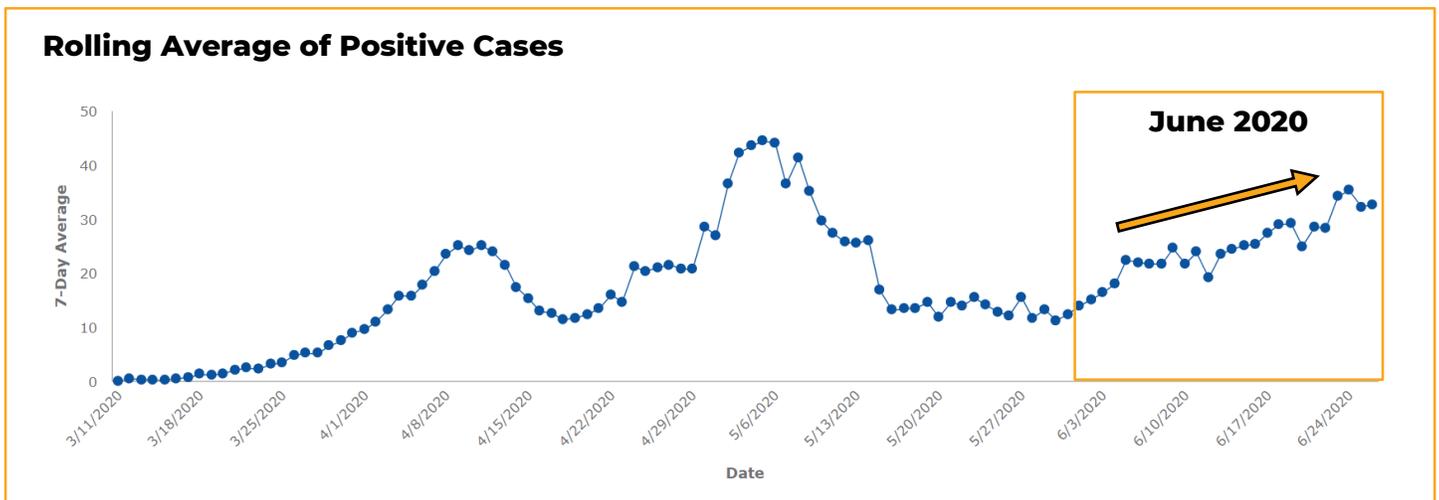
New Public Health Order Requires Wyandotte County Residents to Wear Masks in Public

The move is in Response to Sustained Increase in New COVID-19 in Wyandotte County

Officials with the Unified Government Public Health Department issued a new Local Health Officer (LHO) Order requiring the public to wear masks when in public, in order to slow and contain the spread of COVID-19 in Wyandotte County.

The move comes in response to the continuing increase of COVID-19 cases in Wyandotte County, and only days after UGPHD officials extended the Phase 3 of the Ad Astra reopening plan in Wyandotte County until at least July 6.

“The seven day rolling average of positive cases continues to be on the upswing,” said Dr. Allen Greiner, Chief Medical Officer of the Unified Government Public Health Department (UGPHD). “This upswing coincides with the reopening of businesses and other venues as we try to get our community’s economy re-started after the shutdown earlier this year. One of the most important things the public can do to help slow the spread of COVID-19 is to wear masks in public. But for this effort to be effective, everyone must participate to protect the overall health of the entire community, not just their own health.”



The above graph shows the continued increase in the rolling seven day average of positive cases of COVID-19 in Wyandotte County. Wyandotte County began relaxing restrictions from the Stay At Home phase of the COVID-19 pandemic in late May, in accordance with the Unified Government’s ReStart WyCo reopening plan and the state’s Ad Astra reopening plan. As you can see from the above graph, the slow increase of COVID-19 cases coincides with this reopening and relaxation of restrictions.

The Order goes into effect at 5 PM on Tuesday, June 30. The Local Health Officer Order requires the following:

- Individuals are required to wear a mask covering the nose and mouth when in a public, indoor space (including a workplace, business, or place of worship).
- Masks should be carefully positioned over the mouth and nose when it is put on, in a manner to avoid touching or readjusting the mask until it is removed.
- Masks are not required inside a solitary, enclosed workspace such as within an individual's solitary office.
- Individuals are required to wear a mask covering the nose and mouth when in a public, outdoor space (with the exception of socially-distanced outdoor exercise).
- This includes all outdoor public gatherings such as bus stops, farmers markets, places of worship and restaurant bar or patio seating areas.
- Masks are not required when eating or drinking, but individuals should remain socially distanced and are required to wear a face mask before and following eating.
- Washing your hands is encouraged before taking masks off and prior to putting them back on.
- Individuals with medical conditions must wear a full face shield covering the mouth, nose and eyes as an alternative to a face mask (face shields have a piece of hard, clear plastic that sits in front of the face; these are often worn by healthcare workers in addition to other protective equipment)

The following individuals are exempt from the requirement to wear a face covering:

- Those who are deaf or hard of hearing
- Children younger than five years old; and
 - Children who are younger than two years old should never wear face coverings due to the risk of suffocation.
 - Children who are two, three, or four years old, with the assistance and close supervision of an adult, are strongly recommended to wear a face covering at all times in settings, like grocery stores or pharmacies, where it is likely that a distance of at least six feet cannot be maintained from non-household members and vulnerable people must go.
- Persons with a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that prevents wearing a face covering. This includes, but is not limited to, persons with a medical condition for whom wearing a face covering could obstruct breathing or who are unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without assistance.

In addition to the requirements listed in the Order, the UGPHD staff offer the following tips about masks and cloth face coverings:

- Wear a mask or cloth face covering appropriately (it must cover both your mouth and nose)
- Don't touch your mask or your face. If you need to adjust your mask, clean your hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer before and after touching your mask.
- Cloth face coverings that you can make with items around your home are effective at helping reduce the spread of COVID-19. You do not need a surgical mask or other medical-grade mask, and it is best to reserve those supplies for healthcare workers.
- Learn about cloth face covering recommendations, including how to make your own mask at home, at [cdc.gov/COVID19](https://www.cdc.gov/COVID19)

As the Order goes into effect, Public Health Officials and the Unified Government will provide additional details and guidance as well as community outreach and education efforts to both residents and local businesses.

The primary purpose of a mask is to protect others in case you may be carrying the virus - even if you don't have symptoms. If we all wear masks, we are all helping protect one another, and especially protect those most vulnerable to serious illness.

“While our community has done a terrific job of helping slow the initial spread of the pandemic, like so many other areas around the country Wyandotte County has experienced a recent spike in the number of COVID-19 cases,” said Mayor Alvey. “In an effort to continue the re-opening of our community, we must continue to follow and adhere to the advice of medical experts. As such, starting next week Wyandotte County health officials will require individuals to wear masks in public to slow and contain the further spread of this virus. This is a simple, yet effective measure to protect our families, friends, and our most vulnerable, and will help allow our community and local businesses to remain open and return to normal as quickly as possible.”

UGPHD officials emphasize that wearing a mask is **not** a substitute for social distancing or excellent hygiene, including washing your hands several times a day with soap and water for at least 20 seconds each time.

“It’s the combination of these actions that has proven effective at helping us slow and contain the spread of COVID-19,” said Dr. Greiner. “That’s important for two reasons – it protects the health of everyone in our community, especially those most vulnerable to a serious infection from COVID-19. Secondly, it helps prevent our healthcare system from being overwhelmed.”

As UGPHD officials pointed out, even individuals who feel fine or may not feel they are at risk from a COVID-19 infection should take this Health Order seriously and wear masks in public, because they could be a danger to others in the community.

“It’s vitally important that everyone in our community take the increasing spread of COVID-19 seriously and wear a mask when in public,” said Dr. Erin Corriveau, Deputy Medical Officer with the Unified Government Public Health Department. “Even people who feel fine right now might be able to infect several people a day with COVID-19. We have solid evidence that people who develop symptoms from COVID-19 can be infectious for up to two days before their symptoms begin. We also know that some infected individuals never feel symptoms at all, but are still able to spread the virus. By the time illness hits, some individuals may have already infected several other members of the community. That’s why it’s so important for everyone to wear masks, practice social distancing, and wash hands, even if feeling well.”

Another key to slowing the spread of COVID-19 in Wyandotte County is testing, according to Drs. Greiner and Corriveau.

“We have worked with the members of the Health Equity Task Force to make testing more accessible for *all* members of the community throughout Wyandotte County,” said Dr. Corriveau. “This testing is free for anyone who lives or works in Wyandotte County and is provided regardless of the individual’s immigration status, health coverage, or ability to pay.”

You should get tested for COVID-19 if you develop any symptoms, such as:

- Fever
- Dry cough
- Shortness of breath/difficulty breathing
- Headache
- Chills
- Muscle/body aches
- Runny nose

- Sore throat
- Diarrhea
- New loss of taste or smell

You should also get tested if you have been exposed to COVID-19 through close contact (within six feet for at least ten minutes) with someone who has tested positive or through association with a known outbreak.

Testing is available for free to people who live or work in Wyandotte County at multiple community locations, including the UGPHD and a rotating weekly schedule of “pop-up” sites coordinated by the Wyandotte County Health Equity Task Force. Find the latest testing schedule and locations at wycokck.org/COVID-19 or by calling 3-1-1.

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