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Governor Northam Lifts Mask Mandate to Align with CDC Guidance, Announces Virginia to End COVID-19 Mitigation Measures on May 28

Commonwealth has administered nearly 7 million vaccines, 63 percent of Virginia adults have received at least one dose

RICHMOND—Governor Ralph Northam today lifted Virginia’s universal indoor mask mandate to align with new guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Governor Northam also announced that Virginia will ease all distancing and capacity restrictions on Friday, May 28, two weeks earlier than planned. The updates to Virginia’s mask policy are reflected in amendments to Executive Order Seventy-Two and will become effective at midnight tonight along with previously announced changes to mitigation measures.

Governor Northam made the announcement in a new video message.

Virginia is able to take these steps as a result of increasing vaccination rates, dramatically declining COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and statewide test positivity rate, and revised federal guidelines.

“Virginians have been working hard, and we are seeing the results in our strong vaccine numbers and dramatically lowered case counts,” **said Governor Northam**. “That’s why we can safely move up the timeline for lifting mitigation measures in Virginia. I strongly urge any Virginian who is not yet vaccinated to do so—the vaccines are the best way to protect yourself and your community from COVID-19. The message is clear: vaccinations are how we put this pandemic in the rearview mirror and get back to being with the people we love and doing the things we have missed.”

The CDC guidelines state that fully-vaccinated individuals do not have to wear masks in most indoor settings, except on public transit, in health care facilities, and in congregate settings. Businesses retain the ability to require masks in their establishments. Employees who work in certain business sectors—including restaurants, retail, fitness, personal care, and entertainment—must continue to wear masks unless fully vaccinated, per CDC guidance. Those who are unvaccinated or not fully-vaccinated are strongly encouraged to wear masks in all settings.

The state of emergency in Virginia will remain in place at least through June 30 to provide flexibility for local government and support ongoing COVID-19 vaccination efforts. Governor Northam will take executive action to ensure individuals have the option to wear masks up to and after that date. Masks will continue to be required in K-12 public schools, given low rates of vaccination among children.

To encourage all Virginians to take advantage of available COVID-19 vaccines, Governor Northam is inviting Virginians to participate in the “It’s Our Shot, Virginia: Statewide Day of Action” on Tuesday, May 18.

Virginians can take part in the Day of Action by:

1. **Signing up to be a COVID Community Ambassador.** Ambassador will help share COVID-19 updates and materials from top experts and sources with their networks and in their local community. Sign up to become a COVID Community Ambassador [here](#).
2. **Sharing your vaccination story on social media.** Add a [Facebook profile photo frame](#), upload a [backdrop to your next virtual meeting](#), or record a

short video highlighting why you chose to get vaccinated using the hashtag #VaccinateVirginia.

Virginia has administered nearly 7 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines. More than 4 million people have received at least one dose of the vaccine, representing over 63 percent of Virginia's adult population. Governor Northam has said he remains confident the Commonwealth will meet President Biden's goal of having 70 percent of adults vaccinated with at least one dose by July 4.

COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and the percent of positive tests continue to fall throughout the Commonwealth. Virginia is currently reporting a positivity rate of 3.5 percent, which is lower than at any time since the start of the pandemic. The Commonwealth's seven-day average of new cases is 555, the lowest number in over 10 months. Virginia is currently recording its lowest number of COVID-19 hospitalizations at 684. For additional data on COVID-19 on Virginia and vaccination efforts, please see the Virginia Department of Health's data dashboards.

Virginians over the age of 12 can schedule a vaccination appointment by visiting vaccinate.virginia.gov or calling 877-VAX-IN-VA (877-829-4682, TTY users call 7-1-1). Beginning Monday, May 17, the call center hours will change to 8 a.m. until 6 p.m., Monday through Saturday.

The full text of Seventh Amended Executive Order Seventy-Two and Order of Public Health Emergency Nine, which takes effect on May 15, can be found [here](#).

The full text of Executive Order Seventy-Nine, which takes effect on Friday, May 28, can be found [here](#).

Visit virginia.gov/coronavirus/forwardvirginia for more information and answers to frequently asked questions.

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