

March 9, 2022

## Staying safe as mandates disappear

NYC has lifted its mask and vaccine mandates.

### Communication Support

New Yorkers are divided in their response to the city rolling back COVID-19 restrictions, with some rejoicing and others wondering if the move came too soon. This week's newsletter offers advice on how people, especially those who are most vulnerable, can stay safe as mask and vaccine mandates disappear. —PGP Response Team

### Talking points on staying safe

As of this week, New York City is no longer requiring masks indoors, including in schools. Restaurants, theaters, and gyms also no longer have to require proof of vaccination. For many New Yorkers, the rollback of restrictions calls for a sigh of relief. But for others, especially those who are more vulnerable or parents of young kids, the recent developments are a cause for anxiety.

The talking points below provide guidance for how to keep yourself and your loved ones safe as mandates disappear.

#### **Monitor local transmission and continue to use the tools that work.**

- Check the CDC's evaluation of [New York City's risk level](#) and adapt accordingly to guidance on protective measures.
- Use the map by zip code on [this page](#) to monitor your local community's test positivity and hospitalization rates.
- Get tested if you experience symptoms or may have been exposed. You can now [order](#) more free at-home COVID-19 tests from the government.
- Consider wearing a high-quality mask in certain situations, such as large and/or indoor gatherings, even if it is not required and especially if you are more vulnerable.
- Masks continue to be required on mass transit and at medical facilities.

### Work to protect younger kids.

- Students are no longer required to wear masks in the city's public schools. Masks are still required for kids under 5, who are not eligible to get a COVID-19 vaccine yet.
- The city's K-12 schools will continue to conduct daily screenings to check for COVID-19 symptoms.
- Although the vaccine for kids 5 to 11 still protects against severe illness, hospitalization, and death, it is less [effective](#) in protecting against infection.
- Masks help to protect kids from infection, but they can also [inhibit](#) educational development and social interaction.
- Evaluate the pros and cons of masking your child on a situational basis. Use [high-quality, well-fitting](#) pediatric masks for maximum benefit.
- You can also protect your kid by making sure the older children and adults around them are up to date on vaccinations.

### Remember, you still want to avoid a COVID-19 infection.

- The CDC has shifted its focus from keeping infections down to preventing hospitalizations, but at the individual level, avoiding infection should still be the primary goal.
  - Long COVID symptoms, such as fatigue, shortness of breath, "brain fog," and changes to individuals' senses of taste and smell, can be hard to manage and can affect everyday life.
  - A new [study](#) found that even mild cases of COVID-19 are associated with brain damage for at least a few months after infection.
  - Stay alert to your community's transmission levels and take reasonable precautions to minimize risk of infection.
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### Frequently asked questions

1. Is it too early for New York City to be relaxing COVID-19 restrictions?
2. Should my kid wear a mask to school even if it's no longer required?
3. How common is long COVID and what are the symptoms?

[Download the talking points and FAQs](#)

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### Trending misinformation

**Vaccine opponents organize campaign against COVID-19 vaccine for young children**

The NYC chapter of an international anti-vaccine group has launched a letter-writing campaign to urge local public representatives to vote no on an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) of the COVID-19 vaccine for children under the age of 5. The group claims that COVID-19 vaccines put children at great risk.

**Counter-messaging:** It's unclear why the group is targeting local officials since EUA is granted by the FDA, a federal agency, and not local public health officials or politicians. The EUA for the Pfizer vaccine for young children was delayed by the FDA last month due to insufficient data. The vaccine is unlikely to be authorized for young children until April at earliest.

### **Anti-vaccine, anti-mask rally a breeding ground for misinformation**

Earlier this week, vaccine opponents organized an "End All Mandates" march. Videos from the rally have received thousands of engagements on social media and are full of misinformation about the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines.

**Counter-messaging:** COVID-19 vaccines have kept millions of New Yorkers safe for the last two years. At the peak of the Omicron wave, vaccinated New Yorkers were four times less likely to catch COVID-19, nine times less likely to be hospitalized, and 10 times less likely to die from COVID-19 than unvaccinated New Yorkers.

### **New York state data used to falsely claim vaccines are unnecessary for young children**

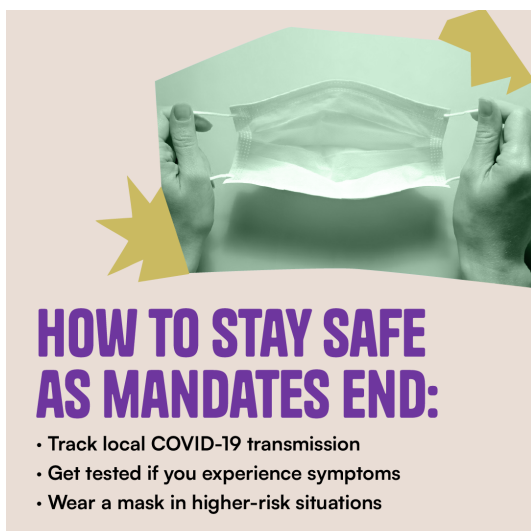
An analysis of New York State data found that the low-dose Pfizer vaccine for children 5 to 11 offered little protection against Omicron infection and diminished protection against serious illness, compared to older children and adults. The study, which is still under peer review, has been covered by multiple major news sites and has been shared on social media with messages discouraging parents from vaccinating their children.

**Counter-messaging:** The study's findings are not a sign that the vaccine is unnecessary for children but rather that the low-dose vaccine was likely not sufficient to provide lasting immunity. An alternative vaccine dose for young children may be necessary. In the meantime, masks provide young children with additional protection against COVID-19.

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## Quick response media assets

Below, we've provided a social media asset in English and Spanish. These assets will be available to download on the NYC Health Communications [resources](#) page soon.



### Proposed caption copy

Masks may no longer be required at businesses and schools in your area, but that doesn't mean you should stop taking measures to keep yourself safe. Monitor your community's COVID-19 transmission and continue to use available public health measures to avoid infection.

### Ejemplo de publicación

Puede que las mascarillas ya no sean obligatorias en las empresas y escuelas de su zona, pero eso no significa que deba dejar de tomar precauciones para mantenerse seguro. Monitoree los niveles de transmisión del COVID-19 en su comunidad y siga aplicando las medidas de salud pública disponibles para evitar la infección.

Visit our resources page, [NYC Health Communications](#), to download free social media assets and toolkits that complement your existing COVID-19 efforts. Resources are available in English and Spanish.