

# Louisiana lifts mask mandate amid sharp drop in COVID cases

October 27 2021, by Melinda Deslatte

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Gov. John Bel Edwards discusses the public health emergency order and statewide mask mandate while speaking during a media briefing on Louisiana's response to COVID-19 Tuesday Oct. 26, 2021, in Baton Rouge, La. Edwards said Louisiana is ending its statewide indoor mask mandate after emerging from its latest and worst coronavirus spike of the pandemic and seeing a sharp decline

in new COVID-19 infections. Credit: Bill Feig/The Advocate via AP

Louisiana is ending its statewide indoor mask mandate after emerging from its latest and worst coronavirus spike of the pandemic and seeing a sharp decline in new COVID-19 infections, Gov. John Bel Edwards announced Tuesday.

The decision marks one of the first mask mandates enacted for the delta variant-fueled outbreak to be scrapped.

"I stand here today optimistic, relieved that the worst of the fourth surge is very clearly behind us now," Edwards said.

But while the Democratic governor is lifting the mask requirement for [grocery stores](#), restaurants, bars and other sites, he's keeping some face-covering rules in place for Louisiana's K-12 schools. Edwards said children have greater exposure risks, with students under 12 unable to yet get vaccinated against the coronavirus.

School districts that maintain tight quarantine regulations for students who come into close contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19 won't be required to have a mask mandate. Those districts that don't require all exposed students to be sent home will have to keep students masked up.

The [new regulations](#) take effect Wednesday.

Despite the governor's decision, Louisiana State University said it will keep its indoor mask mandate through the end of the semester. New Orleans also indicated it won't necessarily follow Edwards' lead.

Edwards reinstated the mask mandate in August, when Louisiana had the nation's highest per capita COVID-19 infection growth and hospitals were inundated.

Since then, new cases and hospitalizations have fallen dramatically, and Louisiana now has one of the nation's lowest rates of new infections.

Still, Louisiana continues to have one of the lowest coronavirus immunization rates in the country—with only 47% of the state's population fully vaccinated.

"We will remain vulnerable in Louisiana to another surge until we can get more of our friends, family and neighbors vaccinated," said Dr. Joe Kanter, the governor's chief public health adviser.

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