

Philadelphia to require vaccine proof for indoor dining

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Philadelphia will require proof of COVID-19 vaccination to dine indoors at bars, restaurants, indoor sporting events and other food-related establishments starting Jan. 3, city and public health officials

announced Monday.

Public Health Director Cheryl Bettigole said Philadelphia has seen infection rates double in the last few weeks and hospitalizations increase by about 50%.

With colder weather driving [people](#) indoors and more holiday gatherings expected, Bettigole and Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney said the proof of vaccination mandate is meant to decrease the chance of transmission while preventing a shutdown of indoor dining like the closures in 2020, early in the pandemic.

"I don't want to close our restaurants or other establishments that serve food. I want them to stay open and operate safely," Bettigole said.

Bettigole said the mandate will apply to the Wells Fargo Center, home of the Flyers and 76ers, or other indoor sporting venues where people buy food and eat it in their seats. The rules will not change for now at outdoor sporting events, but will apply to indoor areas and businesses inside Lincoln Financial Field, where the Eagles play, and similar venues.

Philadelphia is among a growing number of cities across the U.S., including Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York City, requiring people show proof of vaccination to enter various types of businesses and venues.

Kenney, a Democrat, said he visited New York two weeks ago, where dining and other indoor establishments have required [vaccine](#) proof since August, and found the requirements easy to navigate.

"I was in New York two weeks ago and it was not an issue at all. Bring your ID and vaccination card and everything went smoothly," Kenney

said. "That's why we're doing this to stop the real serious thing, which would be shutting down."

Patrons and employees will have to start showing their vaccination cards Jan. 3 to enter establishments where people eat together indoors, including [movie theaters](#) and cafes or bars inside larger establishments like stores or hotels.

Bettigole said for the first two weeks of the mandate, patrons will have the option to show a negative COVID-19 test from the last 24 hours to enter.

But starting Jan. 17, proof of full vaccination for patrons will be needed.

The city mandate allows some extra time for children ages 5-11 and employees to get vaccinated. The city is asking that those groups have a first dose by Jan. 3 and a second dose by Feb. 3.

The requirement does not apply to people who are exempted from vaccination, including children under 5 or people with proven medical or religious exemptions, Bettigole said.

But those with exemptions and children between 2 and 5 years old will be required to present a negative COVID-19 test taken within 24 hours to enter establishments that seat more than 1,000 people covered by the requirement. That includes sports venues, movie theatres, bowling alleys or spaces like museum cafes inside larger venues.

She added that establishments like schools, daycares and others like soup kitchens or shelters that serve vulnerable populations will not require vaccination [proof](#) or negative tests.

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