

Los Angeles County avoids new mask rule as COVID stabilizes

July 29 2022, by CHRISTOPHER WEBER



Travelers wear masks inside Union Station Thursday, July 28, 2022, in Los Angeles. Health officials in Los Angeles County are debating a decision to reinstate an indoor mask mandate Thursday. Credit: AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez

Los Angeles County dropped a plan to impose a universal indoor mask

mandate this week as COVID-19 infections and rates of hospitalizations have stabilized, a top health official said Thursday.

Health director Barbara Ferrer said two weeks ago that the nation's most populous county could again require face coverings if trends in [hospital admissions](#) continued under criteria set by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

On Thursday, she said the county managed to dodge imposition of the broad mask rule. The county remains at the "high" CDC level of community transmission, but it could drop to "medium" in coming weeks.

Ferrer made the announcement during a briefing at which she displayed flat and declining data graphs. She said transmission has dropped steadily since July 23, "potentially signaling the beginning of a downward trend in cases." Hospitalizations are also down.

"We're on a decline right now, and it's hard for us to imagine reinstating universal indoor masking when we're on this significant of a decline," Ferrer said. But she added that [health officials](#) would reassess things should case rates and hospital admissions spike again.

While masks won't be required in most indoor spaces, Ferrer reminded residents that face coverings remain an effective tool to reduce spread.



A security guard wears a mask inside Union Station Thursday, July 28, 2022, in Los Angeles. Health officials in Los Angeles County are debating a decision to reinstate an indoor mask mandate Thursday. Credit: AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez

As it has for most of the pandemic, LA County will still require masks in some indoor spaces, including [health care facilities](#), Metro trains and buses, airports, jails and [homeless shelters](#).

The new mandate, which would have gone into effect Friday, would have expanded the requirement to all indoor public spaces, including shared offices, manufacturing facilities, warehouses, [retail stores](#), restaurants and bars, theaters and schools.

Nationwide, the latest COVID-19 surge is driven by the highly transmissible BA.5 variant, which now accounts for a majority of cases. It has shown a remarkable ability to get around the protection offered by vaccination.

It's still unclear what enforcement of the health order might have looked like. Under past mandates, no individuals were cited for refusing masks, and officials favored educating people over issuing citations and fines.



A worker wears a mask inside Union Station Thursday, July 28, 2022, in Los Angeles. Health officials in Los Angeles County are debating a decision to reinstate an indoor mask mandate Thursday. Credit: AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez



A traveler wears a mask inside Union Station Thursday, July 28, 2022, in Los Angeles. Health officials in Los Angeles County are debating a decision to reinstate an indoor mask mandate Thursday. Credit: AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez



Travelers wear masks inside Union Station Thursday, July 28, 2022, in Los Angeles. Health officials in Los Angeles County are debating a decision to reinstate an indoor mask mandate Thursday. Credit: AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez



People wear masks inside Union Station Thursday, July 28, 2022, in Los Angeles. Health officials in Los Angeles County are debating a decision to reinstate an indoor mask mandate Thursday. Credit: AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez



Visitors wears masks inside Union Station Thursday, July 28, 2022, in Los Angeles. Health officials in Los Angeles County are debating a decision to reinstate an indoor mask mandate Thursday. Credit: AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez

Critics of a new mask rule said they didn't believe it would decrease or stop transmission rates. Los Angeles County Supervisor Kathryn Barger said she was pleased with Ferrer's announcement because "unenforceable mandates don't work."

"I'm hopeful that we will now be able to move on from this heightened focus on masking mandates to what really matters—focusing on promoting the efficacy of vaccines and boosters, improving access to COVID-19 treatments, and continuing to educate our County's residents

on the benefits of masking," Barger said in a statement Thursday. "I am comfortable leaving this decision in the public's very capable hands."

The LA County cities of Long Beach and Pasadena have their own [health](#) departments that typically align with LA County's rules. But not this time. Both cities said this week that they would not impose requirements for [face coverings](#).

And the City Council of Beverly Hills voted unanimously Monday to not adopt a mask mandate imposed by the county.

© 2022 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed without permission.

Citation: Los Angeles County avoids new mask rule as COVID stabilizes (2022, July 29)
retrieved 7 August 2024 from
<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-07-los-angeles-county-mask-covid.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--