

MEDIA RELEASE

ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



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COUNTY OF ERIE
OFFICE OF THE
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Erie County school mask order remains in effect until further notice

Erie, PA — County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper and Erie County Department of Health announce that the universal indoor masking order for all public and private pre-schools, primary and secondary schools in Erie County remains in effect until further notice. A copy of the order can be found at eriecountypa.gov/covid-19/community-resources.

In addition to helping protect the health of students, educators and personnel in schools and their families from the spread of COVID-19, Dahlkemper said, "The goal is to keep students in school for in-person learning, which is better for most students' development and allows their adult family members, guardians or caretakers to go to work, which helps our economy."

Wearing a mask that covers the mouth and nose has been proven to reduce the spread of infectious respiratory illnesses such as COVID-19. Studies on the effects of wearing masks have proved that there is no change in oxygen or carbon dioxide levels when people wear cloth and surgical masks while resting and exercising.

"The Erie County Department of Health's aim is to prevent injury, illness, disease and premature death in the community," said Melissa Lyon, director of the health department. "We ask the Erie County community to support these goals. Keeping ourselves and our loved ones healthy and safe from this vaccine-preventable disease is a continuing effort."

Erie County currently has a high rate of transmission, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). CDC guidelines recommend all people, including those who are fully vaccinated, should wear masks indoors in areas with substantial to high transmission rates of COVID-19.

New cases

The reported new cases of COVID-19 in Erie County are as follows:

Date	Positive cases reported
Dec. 12	118
Dec. 11	140
Dec. 10	293

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The total case count is now 38,514. The total deaths due to COVID-19 remain at 621.

Information on cases and deaths in Erie County and other data such as reports on vaccination demographics can be found at the Erie County Government website <https://eriecountypa.gov/covid-19/positive-cases-in-erie-county/>. Latest recommendations and related data is also available at the websites of

- Pennsylvania Department of Health health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Cases.aspx
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view](https://www.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view)

Benefit of vaccination

The benefit of vaccination is that it helps the body prevent severe illness and lessens the likelihood of needing hospitalization. If having concerns or questions about vaccines, approach healthcare professionals or contact the Erie County Department of Health at 814-451-6700 for facts and answers.

Free vaccines are available for residents of Erie County ages 5 years and older. To find vaccines in nearby locations:

- text ZIP Code to 438829
- visit vaccines.gov
- call 1-800-232-0233

For schedule of local vaccination sites, visit eriecountypa.gov/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine. Not all locations can offer COVID-19 vaccines to children 5 to 11 years old. Call ahead to check availability.

Importance of testing

Testing for COVID-19 is recommended if exposed to anyone who has COVID-19 or if exhibiting its symptoms such as coughing, difficulty breathing, fever or chills, muscle or body aches, vomiting or diarrhea, or loss of taste or smell. Testing results can help determine appropriate care and treatment if needed.

Rapid testing results are available in 15 minutes at free mobile testing clinics organized by the Erie County Department of Health. No insurance is needed. To follow up results, email zheeter@lecom.edu.

- **Thursday, Dec. 16, 4 to 7 p.m.** at Mill Village Fire Department, 14408 N. Main St., Waterford

For list of local testing sites, visit eriecountypa.gov/covid-19/covid-19-testing-information.

Stay home, inform close contacts

Community members who test positive should inform their close contacts. Even if they do not have symptoms, those who have COVID-19 and those identified as their close contacts should cooperate with all public health recommendations, including staying home or quarantine, to prevent the spread of infection to others. For guidance on quarantine, call the Erie County Department of Health at 814-451-6700.

For guidance on preventing the spread of COVID-19 at events and business establishments, contact Erie County Department of Health at covidresponse@eriecountypa.gov. All other questions about COVID-19 can be directed to 814-451-6700 or ecdhinfo@eriecountypa.gov.

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