

29 JULY 2021

In accordance with Center for Disease Control and Indiana Department of Health instructions, the Floyd County Health Department is very strongly recommending the use of masks for all children returning to school for the 2021-2022 year.

This week, the CDC has changed the previous guidance, largely due to the increased risk from the Delta variant. Vaccinated students over 12 are now recommended to wear masks while indoors at school. Masks are not required for outdoor activities. The previously vaccinated are now asked to test for COVID 3 to 5 days after a known close contact but are not required to quarantine or miss school.

Quarantine is required for unvaccinated close contacts. A close contact is someone within 6 feet of a COVID positive person for more than 15 minutes in a single day. Close contacts may return to school on Day 8 if a PCR COVID test is negative on Day 5,6, or 7; but the person will need to mask until Day 14. Other options for unvaccinated close contacts are to quarantine at home until Day 10, then return with mask on until Day 14, or return on Day 15 if not tested and unwilling to wear a mask. Day 0 is the last day of exposure. Close contact status is not changed by masking if unvaccinated; that is, if you are unvaccinated but wearing a mask this paragraph still applies.

All age groups are recommended to test with the onset of symptoms.

The Delta variant poses a markedly worse public health threat than the previous UK strain. Its incidence has escalated from 5% of cases in May to over 80% of cases currently. The new variant is over 225% more infectious, with 1000 times the viral load of the original COVID-19 strain. In the last 6 weeks our local index has inflated from 0.42% to 8.4%. A continuing rise in the number of active COVID cases in Floyd County may trigger a return to a local mask requirement or mandate.

The vast majority of the present COVID cases are occurring in unvaccinated people. Non-immunized members of our community should get the vaccine as soon as possible to protect themselves, their families, and our community. As the successful Smallpox eradication campaign showed, viral illness can be neutralized, but it takes all of us to end this Pandemic.

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