



# *Town of Adams* • Massachusetts 01220

Board of Health Department

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## **HEALTH BOARD CHAIR APPEALS TO YOU TO KEEP ADAMS SAFE**

13 September 2021

Dear Neighbors:

I am appealing to each and every resident in Adams to “Stop the Spread.” Won’t you join me? To banish COVID-19 from our town, the most immediate measures we can take are masking and social distancing. Therefore, I am proposing that the Board of Health issue a Directive, a draft of which is on the following pages. I intentionally chose the word “Directive,” which falls just short of a Mandate, to convey my alarm about our present crisis, an alarm I share with my public health colleagues throughout the county.

The “Delta variant” now causing a resurgence of COVID-19 in our communities carries much higher viral loads than earlier variants and is transmitted at twice last year’s rate, including among those who have been vaccinated. To dramatically reduce potentially deadly infections in Adams, the Board of Health urges all townspeople to vaccinate, mask, and socially distance—our main tools presently available to shield our species against this worldwide pandemic.

Because only masking and social distancing are currently within the Board of Health’s authority, we have limited the proposed Directive to these two measures. However, we continue to support vaccination, hoping that those who have hesitated to date will be persuaded by the Federal Drug Administration’s approval of Comirnaty (Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine).

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At our Board of Health public meeting on Wednesday, September 15<sup>th</sup>, we will continue our consideration of a Directive. We will present our rationale, hear comments on, discuss, and (if so voted by the Board members present) adopt a Directive. In short, the proposed Directive calls for universal masking in all publicly accessible indoor places and in outdoor venues where social distancing is not possible. Moreover, it extends the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) requirement for universal masking in public schools to private schools located in Adams. The Directive will be periodically reviewed and modified by the Board of Health as the good of the public health dictates. The Directive will not be extended beyond its usefulness; that is, we will seek to balance our residents' happiness & prosperity against their healthfulness.

I want to thank those local businesses that have already stepped up to keep their employees and patrons safe by instituting universal masking policies and offering distancing reminders. Restaurants have offered outdoor dining and otherwise spaced and screened tables. Schools are adhering to, or even exceeding, DESE guidelines to protect their staff, students, and visitors.

Importantly, this Directive is a "Call to Action" rather than a mandate. As such, we are confident that Adams has both the will & the fortitude to do what is necessary to get us through the resurgence of Delta as well as any future threat to the public health. While we recognize our ability to issue mandates, we prefer to rely on education & example to protect our public.

For better or worse, Adams, we are all in this together. United, we can repel this deadly foe. Let's do it. Let's mask up!

Thank you, Dave Rhoads  
Chair, Adams Board of Health

**ADAMS BOARD OF HEALTH**  
**8 Park Street, Adams, MA 01220**

**COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH DIRECTIVE REGARDING THE WEARING OF MASKS, OTHER FACE COVERINGS, AND RELATED SAFETY STANDARDS**  
**Effective: September 16, 2021**

WHEREAS, the Delta variants are now accounting for approximately 98% of positive cases in Massachusetts (source <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#variant-proportions>) and cases have started to appear in the Town of Adams; and

WHEREAS, these variants are almost twice as contagious as previous variants; and

WHEREAS, we know that masks slow or prevent transmission of all COVID-19 variants so far; and

WHEREAS, as we see cases rise in surrounding counties and communities, we are committed to preventing transmission, keeping our numbers as low as possible, keeping businesses and schools open, and preventing our most vulnerable from severe illness; and

WHEREAS, according to the CDC, “Given what we know about the Delta variant, vaccine effectiveness, and current vaccine coverage, layered prevention strategies, such as wearing masks, are needed to reduce the transmission of this variant.”; and

WHEREAS, children under the age of 12, i.e., most elementary school students, are as yet ineligible for vaccination; and

WHEREAS, household transmission is high with Delta and can infect even vaccinated household members; and

WHEREAS, Boards of Health have authority under Massachusetts General Law Chapter 111, section 31 may make reasonable rules and regulations.

**NOW, THEREFORE, commencing on September 16, 2021, at 12:01 AM., the following directives are hereby implemented in the Town of Adams and shall remain in effect until this Directive is rescinded and/or amended.**

1. Appropriate CDC-approved masks or face coverings shall be worn in all publicly accessible indoor spaces in the Town of Adams, unless seated at a table consuming food or drink, or while smoking a cigar in an adult-only retail tobacco store. A sign shall be posted at the entrance of all buildings. An acceptable sign can be found at [town.adams.ma.us/board-health](http://town.adams.ma.us/board-health); any other masking requirement sign with similar content may be used.
2. Food service establishment employees shall wear a mask or face covering when serving customers, both indoors and outdoors.
3. Insofar as is possible, masks should also be worn in crowded outdoor public events, and where physical distancing, of at least six feet or more, cannot be maintained. This includes but is not limited to: events held at fairgrounds/parks, outdoor performance and event venues, restaurants, amateur athletic events, school events (both public and private) such as recess and school sports, etc.
4. Masks shall be fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face; and be secured with ties or ear loops; and include multiple layers of fabric; and allow for breathing without restriction; and may be removed for eating, drinking where allowed. Disposable surgical/procedural masks, N-95s, elastomeric masks, cloth masks are permitted. Masks with exhale valves are not permitted.
5. Event planners and or any organizations shall consider postponement of any outdoor or indoor event/gathering where social distancing of a minimum of 6 feet per person cannot be maintained.

6. All schools in Adams, including private schools, are ordered to follow the universal mask mandate issued by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, August 25, 2021 (Implementation of DESE Mask Requirement). Briefly, all students 5 and above, staff, and visitors are required to wear CDC-approved masks indoors unless eating, drinking, or taking a mask break. Exemptions may be granted for medical or behavioral reasons. Further details may be found in the DESE Memorandum.

**In addition, the Adams Board of Health is encouraging community members to:**

1. Get vaccinated and stay at home if showing signs of symptoms.
2. Get tested for COVID-19 if you have new or unexplained symptoms, before and after travelling and/or if you have been exposed.
3. If at risk of exposure, call and schedule a test at 1-855-BMC-LINK.
4. More information on COVID-19 can be found at <http://www.mass.gov/covid-19> and <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus>.

**Exemptions:**

1. Nothing in this order shall be construed to require a mask to be worn by children under age two (2) or children who frequently compromise mask integrity with frequent manipulations or removals, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance or anyone who cannot wear a mask for other underlying health and safety reasons.
2. Masks may be taken off in restaurants/bars only while seated and eating or drinking, or while smoking cigars in an adult-only retail tobacco store.
3. Employees in shared office spaces are not required to mask if social distancing of six feet or more can be maintained.
4. Performers who are singing and/or playing brass or wind instruments, who are performance artists or who are presenting or speaking at an event, are not required to wear face coverings but must adhere to social distancing of at least 10 feet from any member of the public when performing indoors and outdoors.

**Section 5: Enforcement:**

We respectfully request that the person(s) or entity in control of a public indoor or outdoor space will assume the obligation to comply with this public health directive as set forth in the above policies and procedures.

Non-compliance with this directive may escalate the spread of COVID-19, thereby impacting the health and safety of all of us. It is our sincere hope that we can support each other & our businesses without the need for a regulation (that is, a mandate).

This directive and its status will be reviewed routinely at regular Board of Health public meetings. The directive will be loosened or tightened based on data from Adams as well as guidance from DESE, the Department of Public Health, & the CDC. If we find it necessary to compel compliance, the Adams Board of Health, under its authority, may implement regulations to enforce this directive. Penalties could include daily fines, suspensions, and/or revocation of Board of Health permits.

This directive is in effect at 12:01 a.m. September 16, 2021, as voted on by its Board of Health members at their meeting on September 15, 2021.