

As COVID Cases Plummet and Vaccination Rates Reach New Heights, Mayor Adams Announces Next Phase of Pandemic Response

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Video available at: <https://youtu.be/ycZJPNx5kas>

Mayors Adams Suspends Key to NYC, Removes Mask Mandate in NYC Public Schools for K-12 Students

Comprehensive Announcement Comes After Data Shows NYC at “Low” Alert Level

More than 17 Million Vaccines Already Administered in New York City

Adams: “We are open for business and NYC has its groove back.”

NEW YORK – New York City Mayor Eric Adams today announced several changes to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions that will continue to protect the health and safety of all New Yorkers, while simultaneously boosting the city’s economic recovery. In the face of quickly declining COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations and more than 17 million doses of vaccines administered, Mayor Adams announced the suspension of the Key to NYC program and the removal of indoor mask mandates in city public schools for K-12 students.

“Two years ago, New York City was the epicenter of the pandemic, but thanks to New Yorkers getting vaccinated and getting boosted we have made tremendous progress,” said **New York City Mayor Eric Adams**. “I’ve said time and time again that the numbers and science will guide us as we continue to recover and rebuild, and now New

York City is back, and vaccinations are why we're back. New Yorkers should be getting out and enjoying our amazing city. The fight may not be over, but we're clearly winning the war. We are open for business and New York City has its groove back."

Beginning Monday, March 7th:

- **Key to NYC rules will be suspended.** Indoor venues, including restaurants, fitness facilities, and entertainment spaces will no longer be required to check for proof of vaccination before customers enter. Businesses previously covered by Key to NYC rules will still have the flexibility to require proof of vaccination or masking indoors if they choose.
- **Masks will no longer be required on public school grounds for kindergarten to 12th grade students.** While these public school children will be able to remove their masks, if they so choose, schools will continue to maintain strict COVID-19 protocols, including increased ventilation, a daily screener to ensure those with symptoms do not come to school, and test kit distribution. Masks will continue to be required for all settings with children under 5 years of age (where none of the population is yet eligible for the vaccine), including programs contracted by the New York City Department of Education with 3- and 4-year-old children as well as 3k and 4K classrooms in district schools.

Mayor Adams today also announced that all other COVID-19 mandates will remain in effect. Under the rules, employees will still be required to be vaccinated unless they have received a reasonable accommodation from their employer.

Additionally, Mayor Adams released a new color-coded system that tracks COVID-19 alerts and keeps New York City residents apprised of the risks they face in New York City. This new system will better help New Yorkers understand the current level of COVID-19 risk and how they can best protect themselves and others based on the current risk. The system consists of four alert levels that outline precautions and recommended actions for individuals and government based on the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Community Burden Indicator.

COVID-19 Alert Levels in NYC



COVID-19 Alert Levels:

Alert Level: **Low**

- There is low COVID-19 community spread.
- **Precautions:** Stay up to date - get vaccinated and boosted against COVID-19; consider wearing a face mask in public indoor settings where vaccine status is not known; and get tested if you have symptoms or are at high risk for poor health outcomes. Basic public health precautions, like good hand hygiene and staying home if sick, should be followed.
- **Recommended Government Actions:** Maintain current employer and school vaccine mandates; require face masks in settings with vulnerable individuals and where vaccine status is not verified, such as health care facilities, congregate settings, and public transportation; consider mandating up-to-date vaccination status in certain settings if there is a sustained increase in cases or a new concerning variant.

Alert Level: Medium

- There is medium COVID-19 community spread.
- **Precautions:** Stay up to date – get vaccinated or boosted against COVID-19; wear a mask in public indoor settings where vaccine status is not known; get tested if you have symptoms or were exposed, recently traveled, or attended large gatherings; stay home if sick; keep hands clean. Take additional precautions — such as avoiding crowded indoor and outdoor settings — if at-high risk due to age, underlying health condition, or being unvaccinated, or if interacting with high-risk individuals.
- **Recommended Government Actions:** Continue action from Low Alert Level. Consider requiring face masks in additional high-risk settings where it is crowded and distance cannot be maintained, such as schools. Consider reinstituting Key to NYC requirements if there is a sustained increase in cases or a new, concerning variant.

Alert Level: High

- There is high COVID-19 community spread. Pressure on the health care system in New York City is substantial.
- **Precautions:** Stay up to date – get vaccinated or boosted against COVID-19; wear a mask in all public indoor settings and crowded outdoor spaces; get tested if you have symptoms or were exposed, recently traveled or attended large gatherings; stay home if sick/exposed; and keep hands clean. Consider avoiding higher-risk activities, such as crowded, indoor gatherings.
- **Recommended Government Actions:** Continue action from Medium Alert Level. Increase testing and vaccination capacity; ensure adequate vaccination, testing and isolation capacity in congregate settings; require face masks in all public indoor settings.

Alert Level: Very High

- There is very high COVID-19 community spread. Health care services are overwhelmed by COVID-19 cases.
- **Precautions:** Stay up to date – get vaccinated or boosted against COVID-19; wear a mask in public indoor settings and crowded outdoor spaces; get tested; stay home as much as possible, especially if sick/exposed; and

keep hands clean. Avoid nonessential activities and crowded spaces. Maximize physical distancing in all public settings, including in workplaces.

- **Recommended Government Actions:** Continue action from High Alert Level. Ensure congregate settings are less crowded; consider implementing restrictions on nonessential activities, offering telework and sheltering in place to keep essential functions (such as health care and schools) operating.

“Throughout the pandemic, New Yorkers have stepped up and utilized the tools to overcome the challenges of the past two years,” said **New York Governor Kathy Hochul**. “With the steady decline in cases and hospitalizations from the Omicron peak, we are now safely entering a new phase of the pandemic. I want to thank Mayor Eric Adams for his continued partnership as we work together to fight the pandemic and keep our schools and businesses both safe and open.”

“The governor and I have said all along — we believe in science, we look at the numbers, we follow the data, and New Yorkers, when we asked you to step up, you did,” said **New York Lieutenant Governor Brian Benjamin**. “Today, we turn the page on this chapter in our fight against COVID-19. New York will have the best comeback story the world has ever seen. Our economic recovery starts right now, and the governor and I are ready to show the rest of the world why New York is the best place on earth.”

“Our new COVID Alert system gives New Yorkers a roadmap for how to reduce their own risk in the event that we see another surge or increase in transmission,” said **Health Commissioner Dr. Dave A. Chokshi**. “COVID Alert will keep New Yorkers informed, including about actions to expect from city government. As we look to the months ahead, we must continue to do all we can to prevent unnecessary suffering due to COVID-19.”

“Our ‘Stay Safe, Stay Open’ plan worked. Cases are down 99 percent and we did not have to close a single school since January,” said **New York City Department of Education Chancellor David C. Banks**. “Making masks optional gives families and educators a choice, while remaining vigilant through high levels of testing and following the advice of our public health experts and the CDC.”

“We are winning the fight against COVID because New Yorkers have stepped up and gotten vaccinated — 96 percent of adult New Yorkers have received at least one dose.

We have also continued to prove that our schools are the healthiest place for our students to be,” said **Dr. Ted Long, executive director, NYC Test & Trace Corps; and senior vice president of Ambulatory Care and Population Health, NYC Health + Hospitals**. “I want to thank every New Yorker who has protected their loved ones and neighbors by getting vaccinated — you earned this — and acknowledge the incredible work of our health care heroes who made these milestones possible.”

“New York City’s restaurant and nightlife industry has been devastated by COVID-19, and over the past two years these small businesses have endured ever changing pandemic mandates that have posed significant challenges to their operations, yet they’ve fought hard to persevere and to feed and serve our city during this time of crisis,” said **Andrew Rigie, executive director, NYC Hospitality Alliance**. “Now, with our city achieving a high vaccination rate, a low infection rate, and as we enter the next stage of our city’s recovery, we must continue to be safe and smart, and modify mandates as the situation evolves. That’s why it’s with optimism and the careful consideration of many that we stand in solidarity with Mayor Eric Adams, public health officials, and community leaders to lift the city’s temporary proof of vaccination mandate for indoor dining, as an important step in our resilient city’s revival.”