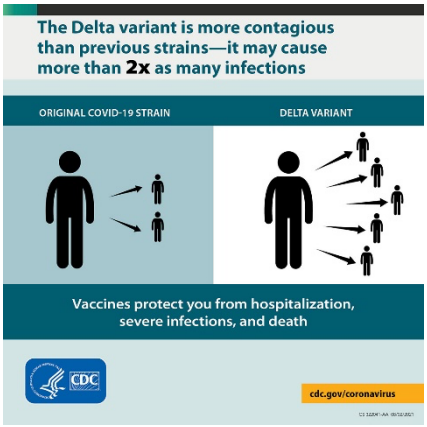
NORTHWEST PORTLAND AREA INDIAN HEALTH BOARD
Indian Leadership for Indian Health

8.12.21

Why do we need to wear masks again?

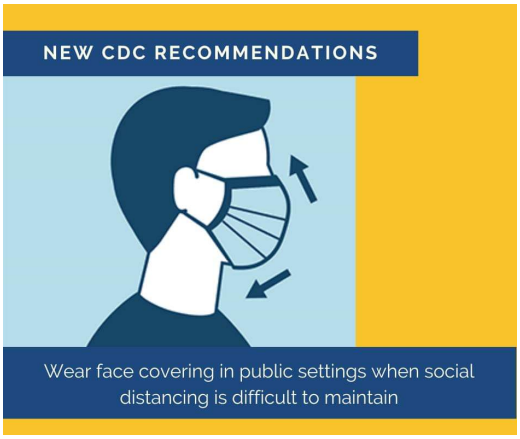
Many mask mandates have been removed but now we are being asked to wear masks again in certain places. It can be confusing and even frustrating. But, because of the highly contagious Delta variant, this is necessary. COVID-19 cases are increasing rapidly.



Indoor, public spaces are where we are being asked to mask up. This is where the virus spreads most easily. Masks can help stop the spread and each of us can help keep our people safe by wearing a mask.

- The new Delta variant is two to three times more transmissible than the original virus and other variants [1]. It also has a shorter incubation period, 4 days instead of 6, meaning people are contagious sooner.
- Because of its short incubation period and increased transmissibility, the Delta variant spreads faster among unvaccinated people, including children and youth [2].
- Both vaccinated and unvaccinated people should wear masks. It is rare, but vaccinated people can still become infected with COVID-19 ("breakthrough cases") and may not know it. This means they can pass the virus to others not wearing masks.
- Vaccination is the key to stopping the pandemic, but as we work to vaccinate all our people, wearing masks can help stop the spread of the virus in this crucial time. Stopping the spread will also help stop new variants like Delta from forming.

  This is particularly important because children under 12 cannot yet be vaccinated so they are very vulnerable. Cases and hospitalizations of children with COVID-19 are rising[3], but vaccinating adults helps create a protective shield around children.
- Be a good relative and help protect your Tribe and community by getting vaccinated and wearing a mask in public indoor settings. Help beat the virus!



Just as we joined together to protect the health of our elders, it is now important to protect our future generations.
Thank you for keeping the circle strong.

Mask up indoors! Get vaccinated!

[1] https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/variants/delta-variant.html
[2] https://www.yalemedicine.org/news/5-things-to-know-delta-variant-covid
[3] https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/children-and-covid-19-state-level-data-report/