



**Public Health Emergency Response**

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## OFFICIAL STATEMENT

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## Missoula City-County Health Department's Official Statement on the Repeal of the Statewide Mask Mandate

Missoula County Health Officials remain ardent in their commitment to keeping Missoula County residents safe amid this pandemic that has stolen the lives of more than 470,000 Americans. At this time, there are no plans to remove Missoula County's mask mandate.

Health Officials will continue to let science guide the critical decisions they make during this health crisis. Right now, the science suggests wearing a mask is essential to slowing the spread of COVID-19—especially as more contagious variants enter the nation. A new study put out by the CDC this week indicates a tightly fitted mask can reduce respiratory droplets by 95%. This makes masks one of the most effective tools we have to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Furthermore, the Harvard Global Health Institute reports the COVID-19 risk level in Montana and Missoula County is in the orange zone. This means we are still close to the red zone, which is considered a tipping point for uncontrollable spread of the virus. When the science suggests it is safe to repeal a mask mandate, Missoula County will do so, but that time is not now. The Board of Health reviews all COVID-19 mandates and restrictions, as well as epidemiological data, each month at the Board of Health meeting.

Missoula County has been a leader in the response against this virus and has continuously reported lower COVID-19 case counts than other large Montana counties during this pandemic due to our COVID-19 mitigation efforts. We want to thank Missoula County residents for their hard work and sacrifice in working with us to make that possible.