

# Montpelier Contra Dance: Updating our COVID policies

When we decided to restart the Montpelier Contra Dance on April 16, 2022, we promised we would keep track of public health conditions and update our policies accordingly. The time has come for us to make some changes.

Starting with our July 16, 2022 dance, **proof of vaccination is no longer required** to attend the dance. **High-quality masks are still required.** Read on to get the full details, and the reasoning behind this change.

## Montpelier COVID details

1. **Vaccination:** Dancers, performers and organizers are no longer required to provide proof of vaccination as of July 16, 2022.
2. **Masks:** All dancers must wear masks. Musicians are asked to wear masks if able; some musicians (like wind instrument players) may not be able to mask given their performance needs, and some callers may choose to unmask for greater clarity while teaching. **We are no longer accepting cloth masks;** N95, KN95, KF94, or surgical masks (a.k.a. medical procedure masks) must be worn. We will provide a mask for anyone who needs one at no charge. (See chart of mask effectiveness below.)
3. **COVID symptoms:** Please help us keep the whole community healthy by ***staying home*** if you or any housemates have tested positive for COVID or have had any of these symptoms in the past 10 days: Fever or body aches, cough, shortness of breath, headache, fatigue, sore throat, congestion, or new loss of taste or smell.
4. **Contact tracing:** ~~If you haven't yet been to a dance in 2022, we will ask for your name and email address at the check-in desk. People who have already attended a dance in 2022 will not need to check in before paying.~~ **EDIT:** As of Oct 29, 2022, providing your name and email address will be optional. We will continue to notify our email lists if someone reports a COVID case, so if you'd like to receive those notifications, please do sign up. We will also post any reports of COVID cases on our webpage and Facebook page.
5. **If someone tests positive:** Please inform us if you test positive for COVID in the 5 days following a dance, by emailing [cdu.tim@gmail.com](mailto:cdu.tim@gmail.com). If we get a report that someone who has been at a dance has tested positive, we will send out a notification to *all* the people whose contact info we have.

## **Why are we changing our policies — specifically, why keep mask-wearing and drop the requirement for vaccination?**

### **We want to be inclusive *and* safe.**

- As organizers, we continue to balance the need for safety and the need for inclusivity in our community. We feel that this change will welcome more folks who want to dance, and have minimal safety impact on our community.
- While a very high percentage of Vermonters are vaccinated ([currently 82%](#)), some people are unable to be vaccinated due to medical conditions — and still want to dance.

### **COVID levels are lower (as of early July 2022) than they were when we restarted our dance.**

- Community levels of COVID-19 are down, according to the CDC. Almost all of Vermont's counties are rated as “Low Community Level,” and the same is true of the surrounding states. ([View the CDC data tracker here.](#))

### **Masks are one of our best defenses against COVID.**

- High-quality medical masks and N95, KN95, and KF94 respirators provide *substantially* more protection than cloth masks, especially in resisting the very easily spread Omicron variants. See the chart at the bottom of this article.
- CDC guidance recommends choosing a medical mask or an N95/KN95/KF94 respirator “when physical distancing is not possible, or when you are in a crowded indoor setting.” Contra dancing certainly meets these descriptions!
- The **other best defense is to stay home if you are sick** or have had COVID recently. Please don't come dancing if you or someone in your household has tested positive for COVID or had symptoms in the 10 days before the dance.

### **Vaccines continue to prevent severe disease, but are not as effective at preventing transmission as they used to be.**

- Current data shows that fully vaccinated people can get infected with and spread COVID, though those cases tend to be mild. ([See CDC data on cases/deaths here.](#))
- Why? As the Omicron variant evolves, it has become more infectious. The COVID vaccines have become less effective at preventing transmission, though they are still very effective at preventing severe disease and death.

### **More COVID cases means more immunity.**

- In addition to vaccination, many dancers have recently contracted and recovered from COVID, which provides improved immune response to exposure in the 90 days following infection. ([See NIH study here.](#))

**Our dance community is highly vaccinated.**

- We have consistently had about 120 vaccinated dancers in the hall since we restarted in April. This is higher than our pre-COVID average of 112 dancers. This implies that our community has an especially high rate of vaccination.
- At this point, given the above facts, we feel that adding a few unvaccinated people to a largely vaccinated group presents a higher risk to the unvaccinated folks than it does to the vaccinated folks. This is a risk that unvaccinated dancers will have to decide for themselves whether or not to accept.

We know that wearing a mask is not anyone's idea of a good time, and we know that not everyone will be pleased with our changes. We are making what we feel is a reasonable choice with our new policy. Again, our goal is to balance safety with inclusivity. The best thing you can do to help keep all the members of our community safe is to wear a high-quality mask while dancing and stay home when you or someone in your household is sick.

If you have any questions about these changes, please feel free to talk to us at a dance or email [cdu.tim@gmail.com](mailto:cdu.tim@gmail.com). We welcome your thoughts and feedback as we navigate dancing safely during a pandemic together.

# Why Cloth Masks Might Not Be Enough as Omicron Spreads

Time it takes to transmit an infectious dose of Covid-19

		PERSON NOT INFECTED IS WEARING			
		Nothing	Cloth mask	Surgical mask	N95
PERSON INFECTED IS WEARING	Nothing	15 min.	20 min.	30 min.	2.5 hours
	Cloth mask	20 min.	27 min.	40 min.	3.3 hours
	Surgical mask	30 min.	40 min.	1 hour	5 hours
	N95	2.5 hours	3.3 hours	5 hours	25 hours

It will take 25 hours for an infectious dose of Covid-19 to transmit between people wearing non-fit-tested N95 respirators. If they're using tightly sealed N95s—where only 1% of particles enter the facepiece—they will have 2,500 hours of protection.

Note: Results published in Spring 2021. The CDC expects the Omicron variant to spread more easily.

Source: ACGIH's Pandemic Response Task Force

Chart from the Wall Street Journal, January 2022. More details here:  
[yourlocalepidemiologist.substack.com/p/a-quick-note-on-masks-and-cdc-guidance](https://yourlocalepidemiologist.substack.com/p/a-quick-note-on-masks-and-cdc-guidance)