

CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19) MASK TOLERANCE

COVID MASKING & UNMASKING - BE KIND TO YOURSELF AND OTHERS

As pandemic restrictions loosen, many places no longer require masks. Even if you're comfortable without a mask, try to have empathy for the fact that other people's lives are different from your own. We all live with varying circumstances, health issues and levels of risk tolerance.

- **Health issues:** Some people fall into vulnerable groups for whom contracting COVID-19 could pose additional health risks, or they live with people who do. Whether or not these individuals are vaccinated, they may simply feel safer continuing to mask up.
- **Concerns about variants:** Scientists and doctors aren't yet sure how coronavirus variants respond to the COVID-19 vaccine. As news of the Delta variant and others continues to make headlines, some people remain on high alert.
- **Low risk tolerance:** No vaccine is 100% effective, so there is still some risk of getting ill. Some people may not yet be comfortable with the lingering risk, though small.

If you're one of the many people who need or would prefer to stay covered up, you might feel awkward or you may have experienced some mockery in situations and at places where everyone else is mostly unmasked. If you're worried about what people might say, or have experienced some questions or comments about remaining masked here are some simple responses:

- "You might think it's silly, but it's what I want to do right now."
- "This is my choice. I just feel more comfortable this way."
- "What I choose to do for my own health is not a criticism of you."
- "This is about my comfort level. You make your own choices, and I'm making mine."

If you are a person choosing to remain masked in places where there is signage recommending masks rather than requiring them. You need to refrain from judging the unmasked choices or perceiving them as careless or inconsiderate regarding others health and well-being. Understand they are just in a different place or have different circumstances in their journey of return to some semblance of normalcy.

Remember whether you remain masked or unmasked - change is hard enough without putting too much pressure on yourself and others. Show yourself and others compassion and patience.

