

Guidance for Masking During Visitation in Nursing Homes



On September 23, 2022, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) updated their [guidance for masking during visitation](#) in nursing homes.



CMS notes that the safest practice is for residents and visitors to wear face coverings or masks, however, the facility's policies regarding face coverings and masks should be based on recommendations from the CDC, state and local health departments, and individual facility circumstances.

Recommendations for masking in nursing homes are based on [community transmission levels](#) which are the number of new COVID-19 cases in a particular area in the previous seven days.

When community transmissions levels are high, masking is recommended in all health care settings, including long-term care facilities. When community transmission levels are not high, and the facility is not experiencing an outbreak, a facility could choose to not require visitors to wear a mask or face covering. *



Community transmission levels are different than [COVID-19 community levels](#), which is based on hospitalizations due to COVID-19 and determines whether masking is recommended for the broader community, not just health care facilities.

Community Transmission Level is:	Masking in a Long-Term Care Facility:
 High	Masking is recommended for all visitors and residents
 Not High (low to medium)	A facility could choose to not require visitors to wear a mask or face covering, except during an outbreak**

*As of October 2022, the majority of the US has **high** COVID-19 community transmission levels, yet low COVID-19 community levels. This fact explains why masking is largely optional in most communities, yet is recommended in health care settings, including long-term care facilities.

**An outbreak investigation is initiated when a single new case of COVID-19 occurs among residents or staff to determine if others have been exposed. Visitors must be allowed in the facility during outbreak testing, and should wear face coverings or masks during visits, which should ideally occur in a resident's room.

REMEMBER! Regardless of the COVID-19 community transmission level, when visiting a resident, you should follow their preference about masking in their presence. Remember, the nursing home is their home, and the choice should be theirs.