

# **UNIVERSITY CLUB OF WINTER PARK**

## **COVID POLICY**

**SEPTEMBER 12, 2022**

The University Club Board has voted to change the Club's COVID Policy from "Masks Required" to "Masks Recommended." However, the policy that only vaccinated people shall be present at Club luncheons and dinners will remain in effect, as well as the policy that Individuals who are not fully vaccinated shall remain masked at all times. As indicated in our June 30, 2022 announcement, the Club considers a person to be fully vaccinated when he or she has been vaccinated and updated (boosted) as eligible per CDC guidelines.

This new policy recognizes that the CDC has lowered the COVID-19 Risk Level for our area from High Risk to Medium Risk. But while the Board has voted to dispense with the mask requirement, the Board will still recommend members continue to mask as necessary for their personal risk level and at crowded events.

Members should note that CDC risk levels are intended not intended to reflect individual risks, but rather the risk of overcrowding our hospitals. The risk to individuals remains high, with an average Positivity rate of 18.17% for Seminole and Orange Counties as of September 8. A Positivity Rate below 10% is required to consider the transmission rate under control. While the threat to overwhelm hospitals is considered Medium, the CDC Integrated County View still considers the Transmission rate in Orange and Seminole Counties to be at a High level.

Our recommendation to downgrade our policy from a Requirement to a Recommendation recognizes that while many members want to make their own decisions, the individual risk for our membership age group remains high. As we take this step toward greater normalization, the Board recognizes a duty to be transparent about the risks of dispensing with masks indoors. To that end, we offer the attached Risk Assessment to inform your choice.

**UNIVERSITY CLUB OF WINTER PARK  
COVID-19 RISK ASSESSMENT  
SEPTEMBER 12, 2022**

**BACKGROUND:** As the University Club relaxes its masking rules, it is important for members to understand there is still a risk associated with COVID-19. Although several Club members who have contracted the disease have only had mild cases, most of our members remain high risk for more serious adverse effects. This may not be apparent as our community focuses on average risk and the impact of this disease has received less coverage. The purpose of this paper is to provide information to help our members decide whether to mask at Club events.

**RISK OF INFECTION:** CDC Positivity Rates provide an estimate of the prevalence COVID in our community, but don't indicate individual risk. The current average Positivity rate for Orange and Seminole Counties is: 18.17%.<sup>i</sup> Health officials consider rates between 5-10% to consider an epidemic under control.<sup>ii iii</sup> The CDC Integrated County View estimates both Orange and Seminole Counties remain at a high COVID transmission level.<sup>iv</sup>

New variants appear to have milder symptoms for most people but are more contagious. The risks of severe disease, hospitalization and death have been mitigated by vaccines and new treatments, but people over 65 are still disproportionately experiencing those adverse outcomes. We strongly encourage members to get vaccinated and stay up to date on boosters. A new booster effective against the BA 4 and BA 5 variants is now available at your pharmacy.

Beyond vaccination, the best ways to avoid serious outcomes is to try to prevent exposure by avoiding crowds, social distancing and masking. Experimental studies suggest exposure within 6 feet of an unmasked infected person can transmit the disease to another unmasked individual within 5-10 minutes. If both parties are wearing surgical masks, the risk drops to 10% after twenty minutes of exposure.<sup>v</sup>

**RISKS FOR OLDER ADULTS:**

1. **WANING IMMUNITY:** Accumulating evidence suggests vaccine effectiveness declines over time, especially in older adults who have the highest risk of morbidity and mortality from COVID-19.<sup>vi</sup> Early studies estimated that mRNA booster protection against severe COVID-19 was durable over 6 months, however, a clinical trial published in July 2022 concludes that, although COVID-19 boosters are effective against the Omicron variant, booster antibody levels decreased substantially within 3 months.<sup>vii</sup> Waning effectiveness, along with the emergence of new variants, could be associated with a resurgence of COVID-19 cases.<sup>viii ix x</sup>

2. **“LONG COVID”:** Research estimates that older adults who survived COVID have more than double the rate of developing “Long COVID” (32% versus 14%).<sup>xi</sup> Studies suggest symptoms can last much longer, for a year or more, and could lead to life-long complications<sup>xii</sup>

3. **HOSPITALIZATION RISK:** From April to August 2022, hospitalization rates per 100,000 for those over 65 increased from 6.4 to 31.5. Hospitalization rates for those over 65 have remained more than 3 times as high as rates in adults ages 50–64 years.<sup>xiii xiv</sup> Adults over 65 represent 80% of hospitalizations and a greater risk of death.<sup>xv</sup>

**4. RISK OF DEATH:** COVID-19 cases are equally spread throughout the population, but the 16% of the U.S. population over 65 has suffered over 75% of COVID deaths.<sup>xvi xvii</sup> A study of 178,568 COVID-19 deaths found that, compared individuals ages 54 years or younger, the COVID mortality rate for those over 65 was more than 62 times higher.<sup>xviii</sup> CDC mortality data indicates risk increases with age. Compared to the 18-29 age group, CDC mortality rate tables show the risk increases by 60 times for those 60-74, by 140 times for those 75 to 84, and 330 times for those over 85.<sup>xix</sup>

**PREVENTIVE STRATEGIES:** For those at higher risk, the CDC recommends keeping up to date with vaccines, boosters, and new antiviral medications to avoid the worst consequences. To mitigate exposure in the first place, the CDC recommends avoiding crowded indoor spaces, social distancing, and masking.

**MASK EFFICACY:** Given the above factors, the University Club Board recommends members at high risk continue to use high-quality well-fitting masks indoors, especially if the room is crowded or you are sitting close to others. Numerous studies have found masking effective at preventing infection and/or severe disease. For example:

One meta-analysis of 172 studies found that face mask use could result in a substantial reduction of risk, with high-quality masks, social distancing, and eye protection most effective in preventing infection.<sup>xx</sup> Another meta-analysis of 13 studies on mask efficacy in community settings found the probability of contracting COVID was 7% among mask-wearers and 52% among those who did not wear masks.<sup>xxi</sup>

Masking is most effective when everyone wears one, but can still provide protection for the wearer, according to a study of the physics of airborne particles. For a typical COVID viral load and infectious dose, social distancing alone, even at 3 meters between two speaking individuals, led to a of 90% probability of infection after just a few minutes. But if only the susceptible wears a surgical face mask, the time to 90% probable risk drops significantly, providing protection for about 30 minutes even at a closer distance of 1.5 meters. With a N95/KN95 mask, the probability of infection drops to about 20% even after an hour.<sup>xxii</sup>

Support for the above study was provided by two additional studies: one examined masking and social distancing and found a 62% lower risk for mask-wearers even in low social-distancing situations.<sup>xxiii</sup> The second examined rates of infection with and without universal masking and concluded that, while masks can't provide perfect protection, most can filter out the majority of large droplet viral particles. Better masks do a better job; the ability to filter the viral load depends on the type of mask. Researchers hypothesized that masking provides protection by reducing the viral load, or "dose" of the virus one could get from exposure.<sup>xxiv</sup>

**CONCLUSIONS:** While the Board's still recommends masking for those at high risk, the decision to relax the rules on masking in the Club leaves it to our members to assess their own risk and take any necessary precautions. We hope this assessment will help members to make an informed choice about masking in the Club. The good news is that new boosters are now available, and we recommend members boost as soon as possible. But also remember that it takes two weeks for vaccine antibodies to reach effective levels, so at-risk members may want to also continue masking at least until the booster takes effect.

## WORKS CITED

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<sup>ii</sup> The CDC puts out reports every Thursday to update its COVID County Data Tracker Website. This information is current as of September 12, 2022, and reflects the average of the Orange County Positivity Rate of 17.19 and the Seminole County Positivity Rate of 19.14.

<sup>ii</sup> Florida reports 89,119 COVID cases as Pfizer, Moderna submit updated boosters for FDA approval. August 26, 2022. <https://www.clickorlando.com/news/local/2022/08/26/florida-reports-89119-covid-cases-as-pfizer-submits-updated-boosters-for-fda-approval/> accessed 09/04/2022.

<sup>iv</sup> CDC Integrated County View. Orange and Seminole counties. DOI September 8, 2022. [https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view?list\\_select\\_state=Florida&data-type=Risk&list\\_select\\_county=12095](https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view?list_select_state=Florida&data-type=Risk&list_select_county=12095)

<sup>v</sup> Bagheri G, Thiede B, Hejazi B, Schlenczek O, Bodenschatz E. An upper bound on one-to-one exposure to infectious human respiratory particles. *Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A*. 2021 Dec 7;118(49):e2110117118. doi: 10.1073/pnas.2110117118. PMID: 34857639; PMCID: PMC8670465. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8670465/> accessed 09/06/2022.

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<sup>vii</sup> National Institute of Health Media Advisory, Tuesday, July 19, 2022. Vaccine-Induced Immune Response to Omicron Wanes Substantially Over Time. <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/vaccine-induced-immune-response-omicron-wanes-substantially-over-time> accessed 09/05/2022

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