



# County of Santa Cruz

## HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY Public Health Division

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### Press Release

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For Immediate Release  
Date: October 1, 2026

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#### **SANTA CRUZ COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER ISSUES ORDER REQUIRING MASKING IN SKILLED NURSING FACILITIES AND INFUSION CENTERS**

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY, CA – A [Public Health Order](#) has been issued requiring skilled nursing facilities and infusion centers, including dialysis and chemotherapy centers, to implement and maintain indoor masking requirements for all individuals who are not patients during respiratory virus season. The Order is effective from November 1, 2026 at 12:00 a.m. through March 31, 2027. The Order is issued in response to the rise in respiratory viruses observed between fall and spring, a pattern that is anticipated to recur annually in Santa Cruz County.

"We are already seeing an increase in respiratory viruses in our community as reflected in wastewater data," said Dr. Lisa Hernandez, Santa Cruz County Public Health Officer. "This Order is intended to protect people who are most vulnerable to serious illness, including hospitalization and death."

Regardless of vaccination status, all individuals who are not patients, including healthcare personnel and visitors in skilled nursing facilities and infusion centers, must wear a face mask while indoors during respiratory virus season when working, providing direct patient care, or visiting in patient-facing areas.

Vaccination against COVID-19 and influenza is the most effective way to protect individuals from infection, hospitalization, and death, while also helping reduce transmission and protect others. The California Department of Public Health has released its [2026-27 Respiratory Vaccine Recommendations](#). All eligible individuals are strongly encouraged to remain up to date with their recommended COVID-19, influenza, and RSV vaccinations.

For more information, visit [www.santacruzhealth.org/respiratoryviruses](http://www.santacruzhealth.org/respiratoryviruses).

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