Institute Guidelines on Use of Masks

As of March 17, 2022, Caltech will no longer require the use of masks in indoor settings, with the exception of instructional spaces.

This aligns Caltech with local public health directives and guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and follows a sharp decline in COVID-19 cases on campus. Nevertheless, we are continuing our surveillance testing program, and we are prepared to reinstate the Institute's masking requirement if case counts begin to rise.

High-quality masks (including surgical masks or N95, KN95, or KF94 respirators) continue to be required in the following situations:

- In instructional settings;
- If you have been exposed to a person who has tested positive for COVID-19. You must wear a well-fitting surgical mask or respirator for 10 days after exposure;
- If you work in a setting that requires a high-quality mask for safety reasons (i.e. while dealing with hazardous materials).

This policy adjustment means that masks are no longer required in most indoor settings, regardless of vaccination status. However, Caltech and health authorities do still strongly encourage the wearing of masks in indoor public settings or in high-risk environments (especially for those at elevated risk for infection) as a measure to limit the spread of COVID-19.

A recent CDC study shows that wearing a well-fitted high-quality mask (surgical or respirator) indoors can lower the wearer’s likelihood of testing positive for COVID-19 by as much as 83 percent (with the use of a respirator) or 66 percent (with the use of a surgical mask).

The decision to wear a mask is a personal one. All members of the Caltech community who wish to continue to wear a mask are encouraged to do so, and the Institute will continue to make high-quality masks available through the Caltech Store.