

What Does The CDC's New Guidance Mean For Climbing Gyms?

May 18, 2021

Posted By: **Garnet Moore** in [CWA Blog](#)



On Thursday, May 13 the CDC updated their [guidelines for fully vaccinated people](#). There's been a scramble across every industry in the US to understand how these new rules affect them. But what does this mean for climbing gyms in the US?

The most recent announcement from the CDC applies only to those who are fully vaccinated, which the CDC defines as two weeks after your final dose of an approved vaccine. As of May 17, in the US, [approximately 37% of the population is considered to be fully vaccinated](#). At the county level the most vaccinated populations are around 50% fully vaccinated.

As with every step through the pandemic, it is vital to look at your local guidance and statistics when making decisions about how to change your policies going forward. At best, somewhere around half of a gym's members are likely to be fully vaccinated and subject to the CDC's new relaxed guidance.

To reflect the CDC's new recommendations, the CWA has revised the [Roadmap to Reopening for climbing gyms](#). There are a number of different mask and distance policies a gym may choose to implement depending on your local guidance. As new information comes in, we will constantly be revising our reopening guidance to provide the most current information.

Since the beginning of this year, we've seen states lifting mandates around masks and distancing, with Florida being the first to cease enforcing mask requirements in September 2020. Currently there are 26 states that are not enforcing mask or social distancing regulations, although individual cities and counties in these states may have stricter laws. A large number of climbing gyms in these states continue to require masks for individuals in their facilities. At the end of 2020, 93% of climbing gyms were requiring masks in their facilities at all times.

While implementing the new CDC guidance, gyms will be forced to evaluate whether they can ask about a customer's vaccination status. Though some states are beginning to implement laws that may restrict a business's ability to inquire about vaccination status, there are no [national restrictions to consider when asking about vaccination status](#). However, asking employees about vaccination status does have some [extra considerations](#) that a gym needs to take into account.

It is possible to create a set of policies where vaccinated customers can climb maskless and those who are unvaccinated or who won't confirm their vaccination status are still required to wear masks. There is even [evidence from the CDC](#) that such a policy is scientifically sound.

But, the difficulty in managing people's behavior at that level has led most non-climbing businesses to either continue requiring masks for all customers or to lift restrictions entirely. Climbing gyms might have a slightly greater ability to manage masks on a person-by-person basis, but it would not come without significant time investment from gym employees. A gym can also adopt an honor system where customers are asked to wear a mask if they are not vaccinated and allowed to go maskless if they are fully vaccinated without any monitoring by the gym itself.

If a gym chooses to keep their mask policies in place while other businesses around them loosen their policies, [constant and clear communication with their customers](#) will be even more important. If a gym chooses to lift their mask restrictions, they may be delaying the return of members who might still be waiting to unfreeze their membership until they feel 100% comfortable.

There is no one-size-fits-all answer as to which choice is best, so it is important to consider the pros and cons of all options and make the best choice for your members, your staff, and your business. You are in the best position to know your community, local guidance, and members.

As you navigate these difficult decisions, the CWA is working behind the scenes to research, advocate, and answer questions. For further assistance, please reach out at hello@cwapro.org or 720-838-8284.

HARNESS THE POWER OF RETAIL: PANEL DISCUSSION

May 20, 2021

SHINING LIGHT ON EATING DISORDERS IN CLIMBING

May 17, 2021