



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on August 23, 2021

Mississippi Orders People With COVID to Isolate or Face Fines and/or Jail

Mississippians who get infected with COVID-19 must self-isolate at home as soon as they become aware of their illness, or face fines and/or imprisonment, the state's health officer ordered on Friday.

In his isolation [order](#), Mississippi State Health Officer Thomas Dobbs said that people are expected to remain home for 10 days after becoming ill or testing positive for COVID-19, regardless of whether they are fully vaccinated or whether they experience any symptoms.



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The order reads:

All persons, including fully vaccinated individuals, infected with COVID-19 **must** remain in the home or other appropriate residential location for 10 days from onset of illness (or 10 days from the date of a positive test for those who are asymptomatic).

The order added that quarantined people would not have to show a negative COVID-19 test to end isolation at the end of 10 days, but do need to be fever-free for at least 24 hours "with improvement of other symptoms." The rule is also to be applied to all K-12 schools' students and staff who would be prohibited from entering school premises.

The order states that refusal to comply would be viewed as a misdemeanor "at minimum," punishable by a fine of \$500 or imprisonment for six months, or both. However, the order provides that "if a life-threatening disease is involved," failure or refusal to obey the rule would be considered a felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 or imprisonment for up to five years, or both.

While isolating, people must limit household contacts, and ideally stay away from others in a separate room, having no guests and wearing a facemask when outside of the room.

The order includes a [link](#) to the CDC guidance on preventing transmission at home. Among other provisions, the CDC recommends wearing masks to everyone who is older than two, not just around other cohabitants, but also around pets, not sharing personal items such as dishes, and wearing disposable gloves.

Speaking at a press conference earlier last week, Dobbs implied the situation is devastating, and is about to get worse. "We're seeing higher and higher numbers of not just cases but hospitalizations, people in intensive care units, life support. And sadly, as we've seen, additional deaths are going to follow," he [remarked](#), while adding "we expect to see that continue."

State Epidemiologist Dr. Paul Byers [warned](#) Mississippi has the highest number of new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents in the nation, and stood at 843 cases per 100,000 in the last seven days.



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Neither of Mississippi's top health officials mentioned any scientific evidence supporting the measures provided in the order, such as the number of cases of asymptomatic transmission, which may be [as low as zero](#), according to one of the largest studies conducted on the issue. Given that up to [45 percent](#) of people who contracted COVID-19 experience no symptoms at all, a large portion of them would be cut off from their regular routine for no reason.

Then, the order raises questions on facemasks' effectiveness. For example, it is unclear why infected people can't leave home and participate in everyday life if they wear masks, which have been touted as one of the most effective measures of preventing the COVID-19 transition. The CDC [recommends](#) everyone to wear a mask in most indoor settings "even if you do not feel sick," citing "several studies" that have found that people with COVID-19 who never develop symptoms and those who are not yet showing symptoms (pre-symptomatic) can still spread the virus to others. "Wearing a mask helps protect those around you, in case you are infected but not showing symptoms," it is noted. Logically, the rule would apply to the known positive cases, but it does not.

The order does not mention the high degree of inaccuracy of COVID-19 tests, and the high number of "false positives," brilliantly [explained](#) by *New York Times* science reporter Apoorva Mandavilli. Per her report, up to 90 percent of people testing positive carry barely any virus to transmit it to others, and, therefore, had no need to be isolated. In fact, the COVID-19 tests are so unreliable, the Food and Drug Administration [quietly recalled](#) thousands of them in late July, applying a so-called Class I recall, meaning the use of "these devices may cause serious injuries or death."

The isolation order comes with rollout of COVID-19 mandates in the state. Just recently, Mississippi's only academic medical center, University of Mississippi Medical Center, has [amended](#) its vaccination policy to make COVID-19 inoculation a condition of employment. "COVID-19 in Mississippi is a raging wildfire but not everyone is helping throw water on the flames in their own backyard," the announcement says, while adding it is crucial "to unite to combat a common enemy — the most vicious pandemic any of us have ever experienced."

On August 12, Governor Tate Reeves expended Mississippi's state of emergency for 30 more days in order to ease the process of procuring additional resources, to allow the healthcare system to continue to transfer patients to hospitals where treatment is available, to ensure expanded access to telemedicine, and to keep options open for use of the Mississippi National Guard, per [local media](#).



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