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Disney and Walmart mandate vaccines for employees

By Moira Ritter, CNN Business

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New York (CNN) — Disney and Walmart, two of America's largest employers, announced Friday that they are requiring employees be vaccinated.

Disney ([DIS](#)) is requiring all its salaried and non-union hourly employees in the US to be vaccinated. Workers who are working on-site but are not yet vaccinated must do so within the next 60 days, according to a statement from the company to CNN Business. All new hires must be fully vaccinated before beginning their jobs.

Employees who aren't already vaccinated and are working on-site will have 60 days to do so; employees still working from home must provide proof of vaccination prior to their return to work. The company also said it has started discussing vaccine mandates with the unions representing its workers.

Walmart ([WMT](#)), the nation's largest retailer, said all its US-based corporate employees must be vaccinated by October 4, according to a Friday memo from Doug McMillon, the company's president and CEO.



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The company has been gradually having workers come back to the office, and plans to be "closer to pre-pandemic levels after Labor Day." It will continue monitoring pandemic conditions before determining if that timeline needs to be altered, McMillon said in the memo.

Customers will not be required to wear masks, but they will be strongly encouraged, and facilities will post signs to remind them of the CDC's new guidelines.

In an earlier Friday memo, Walmart announced that all employees are required to wear masks inside again, regardless of vaccination status, in places with "substantial or high transmission." The new policy is effective immediately, the nation's largest retailer said Friday.

Store managers will receive local updates every Monday to determine their facility's necessary protocol. Customers will not be required to wear masks, but they will be strongly encouraged, and facilities will post signs to remind them of the CDC's new guidelines.

While Walmart is not mandating that its store employees get vaccinated, it will soon implement a new process to verify their vaccine status, and is strongly encouraging workers to get vaccinated. As part of its push for vaccination, the company is offering employees the chance to get vaccinated while on the clock and up to three days paid leave for any reaction to the shot.

Additionally, Walmart is doubling its current vaccine incentive to \$150. Originally, the company was offering employees \$75 to get vaccinated. Current employees who get vaccinated and new employees who were vaccinated before they started at Walmart are all eligible to receive the bonus.

The decision to [reinstate a mask mandate](#) comes following [updated guidelines](#) from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released on Tuesday, recommending that fully vaccinated people resume wearing masks indoors in areas with high transmission rates of Covid-19. That currently includes nearly two-thirds of all US counties.



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Walmart first implemented a mandatory mask policy for all shoppers and employees [in July 2020](#). The company then repealed its policy in May following [updated CDC guidance](#) that fully vaccinated individuals were safe to go without masks in most circumstances. However, since the CDC's initial guidance for repealing mask mandates, the Delta variant has caused a surge in cases while the rate of vaccinations has lagged.

Most other large retailers including Target ([CBDY](#)), Trader Joe's, Publix and Costco [ditched mask mandates](#) in May, too, but are now re-evaluating their policies.

Publix announced Friday that it will require all associates to wear masks regardless of vaccination status effective August 12, according to the company's website.

Kroger also shared on Friday that it will maintain its current policy, which requires unvaccinated associates to wear masks, and requests that unvaccinated customers do the same. The grocery chain is also encouraging, but not mandating, all individuals to wear masks in light of the Delta variant.

Enforcing mask rules with customers has been challenging for retailers throughout the pandemic. Employees are often responsible for monitoring customer behaviors, and interactions have turned violent. Last month, a Georgia grocery store clerk was [killed](#) by a customer in a dispute over masks.

As the pandemic persists, customers are being asked "to be mindful of the guidance provided by local retailers" and to "respect employees and their fellow customers who may continue to wear masks for the safety of themselves and their family," Brian Dodge, president of Retail Industry Leaders Association, said in a [statement](#) Tuesday.

-- CNN Business' Nathaniel Meyersohn contributed to this report.



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