



Florida breaks from virus guidelines: 'The CDC doesn't have a monopoly on the truth'

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WASHINGTON ([TND](#)) — The Transportation Security Administration has extended the masking requirement on airplanes, buses and other transit systems until April 18, as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is reportedly developing a revised policy framework for masks on transit systems, based on new COVID community-level metrics.

“I think community-level metrics work well on the community level, maybe with buses and rapid rail, but when you're dealing with a sense of the variability of community levels around the country and around the world that when you're dealing with airline travel, I don't know how helpful it is,” said Dr. Jeffrey Singer to The National Desk’s Jan Jeffcoat. “All the airplanes are equipped with HEPA filters that make them very safe. In fact, it's safer sitting on an airplane than sitting across the table from someone in a restaurant.”

Singer said it’s important to keep in mind the U.S. is “in the age of omicron.”

“It's so contagious that a huge majority of the population now has some degree of immunity either from vaccination or from natural infection,” said Singer. “I think the most important measurement is going to be hospitalization numbers and hospital capacity.”

Florida is the first state to break away from the CDC's recommendation that everyone 5 and older get the COVID vaccine.

“Based on currently available data, healthy children aged five to 17 may not benefit from receiving the currently available COVID vaccine. The department recommends that children with underlying conditions are the best candidates for the COVID vaccine,” said the Florida Department of Health.

“The CDC doesn't have a monopoly on the truth,” said Singer. “There are numerous times when various doctors with excellent credentials and good knowledge have different interpretations of the data and different recommendations. And Florida's recommendation is not unreasonable.”

But as the CDC continues to face criticism around messaging, Singer said states are moving away from CDC guidelines “in both directions.”

“The CDC said you don't have to wear masks in schools but the D.C. public school system is still requiring a system where masks are in schools,” said Singer. “I think the problem is there's been a lot of mixed messaging by the CDC, largely because there's this attitude that they are the holders of the truth, and what they really should be focusing on is just getting really good information updated out to people and then local public health experts use that information to the best of their ability and make the decisions that way.”