

Some immunocompromised people still need to wear masks despite new CDC guidance

PHOENIX (3TV/CBS 5) - No masks for some, but for others, they need to keep it on. While fully vaccinated people can lose the mask in most places based on the CDC's new recommendation, some can't get the vaccine, and not by choice.

"Just with your basic flu, I've gotten pneumonia five times from that and ended up in the hospital ER," said Melody Olander. Olander has had a neurological disease for the past seven years and cannot get the COVID-19 vaccine because of it, so she's still wearing a mask everywhere.

"An awkward situation, now feeling like you have to explain yourself all over again," she said. "A lot of the vaccinations can make your current medication less effective. So that's not a risk I can currently take at the moment."

[Phoenix-area families share safety concerns following the CDC's new mask guidance](#)

Robert Wilson in Prescott would love to be vaccinated but can't be. Less than a year ago, he got a bone marrow transplant and said he can't get the vaccine until it's been more than a year. Wilson feels judged wearing a mask everywhere he goes now, but said he has no other choice. "People are looking at people with masks and they're saying you're making a political statement," Wilson said. "When you have a bone marrow [transplant], your immune system is completely wiped out."

"The guidance is clearly written that this is not for immunocompromised

people," said Dr. Sam Durrani, chief of staff at Deer Valley Medical Center. Dr. Durrani said while he absolutely agrees with the CDC updating their recommendations for vaccinated people, those changes really can't be adapted by people in Olander and Wilson's situations -- both at risk already and unable to get the vaccine.

"Wear a mask, wear an N95 if you can if you're immunocompromised. Like when you're at the grocery store, you've got to do the best you can to protect yourself," Dr. Durrani said. "There's never going to be a zero risk place that we get to for any disease."



Melody Olander has had a neurological disease for the past seven years and cannot get the COVID-19 vaccine

(Source: 3TV/CBS 5)

As for Wilson, he said with masks being such a controversial topic, he just wants people to understand that for some, it's still a medical need. "These people are wearing masks for very serious reason," Wilson said.

[CDC mask guidance opens doors for the vaccinated, but a long road is ahead for those who are not, experts say](#)

Dr. Durrani said one positive is that immunocompromised people seem to be pretty safe outside and that the virus just isn't spreading nearly as much in outdoor spaces. It's just inside where he said they need to continue to protect themselves.