

Guidance for Face Coverings

There is scientific evidence suggesting the use of Face Coverings by the public could slow the spread of COVID-19. Face Coverings may reduce the spread of infectious particles when someone speaks, coughs, or sneezes. Individuals can spread COVID-19 even if they feel well. In general, you should wear a face covering when in public places, particularly when those locations are indoors or in other areas where physical distancing is not possible.

Wearing a Face Covering should not replace other evidence-based defenses which include practicing physical distancing, staying home when sick and avoiding contact with people who are sick, washing hands frequently, and avoiding touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

When are Face Coverings required?

- You are required to wear a Face Covering when you are in one of the following high-risk situations:
 - Inside of, or in line to enter, any indoor public space. For example, you have to wear a Face Covering when visiting a business like a grocery store, restaurant, or retail outlet.
 - Receiving services at a healthcare setting such as a hospital, pharmacy, medical clinic, laboratory, physician or dental office, veterinary clinic, or blood bank.
 - Waiting or riding on public transportation or paratransit or while in a taxi, private car service, or ride-sharing vehicle.
 - While working, whether at a work site or off-site when:
 - Interacting in person with any member of the public or working in any space visited by members of the public (regardless of whether anyone from the public is present at the time);
 - Working in any space where food is prepared or packaged for sale or distribution to others;
 - Working in or walking through common areas, such as hallways, stairways, elevators, and parking facilities;
 - Any room or enclosed area where other people are present and not able to physically distance (except for members of your own household or residence).
 - Driving or operating public transportation or paratransit vehicle, taxi or private car service or ride-sharing vehicle when passengers are present (although Face Coverings are strongly recommended when no passengers are present).

- While outdoors in public spaces when you are not able to maintain physical distance of 6 feet from those who are not in your household.
- You should carry a Face Covering with you anytime there is a chance that you might be unable to keep 6 feet of distance between yourself and people you don't live with.

When are Face Coverings NOT required?

- You are not required to wear a Face Covering when you are outside walking, running, biking, or participating in other outdoor recreation or work if you are alone or with members of your household.
- You are seated at a restaurant or other establishment that offers food or beverage service while you are eating or drinking.
- You are obtaining a service involving the nose or face for which temporary removal of the face covering is necessary to perform the service.
- You may choose to wear a Face Covering even when it is not required.
- If you have, live with, or are caring for someone with or likely to have COVID-19, refer to [Home Isolation Instructions for People with Coronavirus-2019 \(COVID-19\) Infection](#) for additional information about Face Coverings.

Who should NOT wear Face Coverings?

- People who may have difficulty taking off a Face Covering by themselves, including children under 2 years (due to increased risk of suffocation, strangulation, or Sudden Infant Death Syndrome/SIDS) and people who are unconscious or incapacitated in any way.
- People who have trouble breathing.
- People who have a medical reason why they cannot wear a face covering (though reasonable alternatives should be sought in this case).
- People who are hearing impaired, or communicating with a person who is hearing impaired, where the ability to see the mouth is essential.
- People for whom wearing a face covering would create a risk to the person related to their work, as determined by local, state, or federal regulators or workplace safety guidelines.
- Note that prisons and jails, as part of their mitigation plans, have specific guidance on the wearing of face coverings or masks for both inmates and staff.
- Wearing face coverings while exercising is not recommended.

How should a Face Covering be worn?

- Wash your hands before and after putting on and taking off your Face Covering.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth when putting on and taking off your Face Covering.
- Do not share Face Coverings with others, even people you live with.
- Discard used disposable Face Coverings in the trash after each use. Place used reusable Face Coverings in a bag or bin until they can be washed.
- Discard cloth face coverings that:
 - No longer cover the nose and mouth
 - Have stretched out or damaged ties or straps
 - Cannot stay on the face
 - Have holes or tears in the fabric

Face Coverings used by the public should:

- Cover the nose and mouth and fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face
- Be secured to the head with ties, straps, or ear loops, or wrapped around the lower face
- Include multiple layers while allowing for breathing without restriction
- Be able to be cleaned regularly without damage or change to shape

What are different types of Face Coverings?

Cloth Face Coverings

- Cloth Face Coverings can be made from a variety of fabrics, such as cotton, silk, or linen. They may be factory-made, sewn by hand, or improvised from household items such as bandanas, neck gaiters, scarves, or tightly woven fabrics, such as cotton t-shirts and some types of towels.
- Wash and dry new Cloth Face Coverings before you wear them, and after each use or at least once a day. Place used Cloth Face Coverings in a bag or bin until they can be washed. Wash and dry Cloth Face Coverings in accordance with [CDC guidelines](#).
- Discard Cloth Face Coverings that have stretched out or no longer stay over your nose and mouth, have damaged ties or straps, or have holes or tears in the fabric.

Medical respirators and face masks

- The public should not purchase or use respirators (N-95 masks) or surgical masks intended for the healthcare setting. Medical respirators and surgical masks are critical supplies that must be reserved for healthcare workers and other first responders, as recommended by current CDC guidance.

Face shields

- Face shields consist of a clear plastic barrier that covers the face.
- Face shields may be worn by people who are unable to wear other types of face coverings for medical or other reasons.
- Face shields can be made from materials found in craft or office supply stores.
- Face shields should extend to below the chin, cover the ears, and have no exposed gap between the forehead and the shield's headpiece.
- Face shields should be cleaned with soap and water between each use.
- Face shields are required for wait staff and other employees when servicing customers not wearing a cloth face covering to eat and drink at bars and restaurants.
- It is unclear whether face shields are as effective as face coverings in slowing the spread of COVID-19.