



GUIDANCE FOR THE USE OF FACE COVERINGS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

This document provides information about the use of face coverings by the public when outside of the home. Consistent with the Centers for Disease Control Prevention (CDC), wearing face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies) is required. Face covering use is in addition to handwashing and social distance requirements, it should not be used as a substitute for other protective actions.

Requirements in Delaware (effective 9.4.20)

- Face coverings are required for children enrolled in Kindergarten up to age 18, as well as adults.
- Face coverings are strongly encouraged for children age 2 through pre-Kindergarten age.
- Face coverings must not be worn by children under age 2.
- Businesses may need to provide customers who have a medical reason not to wear a face covering with reasonable accommodations to services. This does not include allowing them to enter a business without a face covering.
- Business owners, employers and organizations must require written documentation, such as a doctor's note, for any employee, contractor, or volunteer who is unable to wear a face covering due to a medical reason.

Public Health Guidance

- The best defense against COVID-19 is wearing a face covering and maintaining at least 6 feet of social distance from others.
- Face coverings prevent people who have COVID-19 from spreading the virus to others. Face coverings also help protect the person who is wearing a face covering.
- COVID-19 can be spread by people who do not have symptoms and do not know that they are infected. That's why it's important for everyone to wear a face covering in public settings and practice [social distancing](#) (staying at least 6 feet away from other people). Face coverings with exhalation valves or vents should be avoided and do not help prevent the person wearing the face covering from spreading COVID-19 to others (source control).

Considerations

- This guidance is for the use of face coverings only. Members of the general public are not recommended to use medical/surgical masks, as doing so could endanger levels of personal protective equipment for health care personnel.

- Individuals should practice strict hand washing before and after touching and adjusting the face covering. Face coverings are not a replacement for washing hands, physical distancing while performing essential activities, and staying home.
- You should wear a face covering that fits snugly over your nose and mouth and does not have gaps. Bandanas that do not fit tightly around the mouth and nose are not considered effective.
- Face coverings made out of densely woven fabric, like cotton, and that are at least 2 layers of fabric are more effective than single layers or polyester/spandex face coverings. Single layered polyester/spandex gaiters are not considered effective alone.
- If you are sick, you should wear a face covering if you must be around other people, even at home.

Face Shields

- Delaware does not allow face shields as an alternative to face coverings unless an employee, contractor, or volunteer has a documented medical condition that prevents them from wearing a face covering.
- Face shields have been recommended or required as an additional protection, when combined with a face covering, in certain situations. Close personal services, such as hair and facial services, that require the client to remove their face coverings are an example. People performing close personal services must wear a face shield and a face covering when clients must remove their face coverings.
- For situations where people must be able to see a speaker's mouth, such as educators working with special needs populations, clear face coverings may be used if they still provide a tight fit and cover the nose and mouth.

BACKGROUND

What is a face covering?

A face covering is a cloth, paper, or disposable face covering that fully covers the nose and the mouth. The face covering should be comfortable, so that the wearer can breathe comfortably through the nose and does not have to adjust it frequently, so as to avoid touching the face. Face coverings with valves should be avoided, per CDC guidance. Face coverings can be secured to the head with ties or straps or simply wrapped around the lower face. Research has shown that certain more densely woven fabrics may be more effective. A face covering may be factory-made or sewn by hand or can be improvised from household items such as scarfs, T-shirts, sweatshirts, or towels.

How effectively do face coverings prevent the spread of COVID-19?

Face coverings are required as a simple barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from traveling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the mask coughs, sneezes, talks, or raises their voice. This is called source control. This is based on what we know about the role respiratory droplets play in the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19, paired with emerging evidence from clinical and laboratory studies that shows masks reduce the spray of droplets

when worn over the nose and mouth. COVID-19 spreads mainly among people who are in [close contact](#) with one another (within about 6 feet), so the use of masks is particularly important in settings where people are close to each other and where social distancing is difficult to maintain. Improper or inadequate ventilation can also increase transmission risk, another factor that may require you to wear a mask when indoors. Consistent with Governor Carney's [27th Modification to the State of Emergency](#) in Delaware, face coverings are required for anyone Kindergarten age and older, in businesses or indoor settings open to the public. This includes lobbies, elevators, hallways, bathrooms and meeting rooms, as well as private residences where more than 10 people who do not reside there are gathered. Face coverings are not required in office buildings or meeting rooms when individuals can maintain at least six feet of social distance between each other, or when a person is in their personal office alone. DPH recommends wearing a face covering as much as feasible in a bar or restaurant, removing it only when needed to eat or drink. In a gym, face coverings must be worn at all times, including when weight-lifting, unless a person is breathing hard from vigorous physical activity.

When should I wear a face covering?

You are required to wear a face covering when you are in a business or in a public indoor or outdoor space, especially where it may be more difficult to maintain social distancing, such as shopping at the grocery store or while at the park. Wearing a face covering does not eliminate the need to physically distance yourself from others. If you are sick you should wear a face covering, over your nose and mouth if you must be around other people even at home.

How should I care for a face covering?

Washing your face covering frequently, ideally after each use, or at least daily is strongly recommended. Use a bag or bin to store face coverings until they can be laundered with detergent and hot water and dried on a hot cycle. If you must re-wear your face covering before washing, wash your hands immediately after putting it back on or adjusting the mask, and avoid touching your face. Discard face coverings that:

- Have stretched out or damaged ties or straps
- No longer cover the mouth and nose
- Don't stay on the face
- Have any rips or holes in the fabric

References:

State of Delaware Executive Order:

<https://governor.delaware.gov/health-soe/twenty-seventh-modification-state-of-emergency-declaration/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>

Office of the Surgeon General:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPx1yqvJgf4&feature=emb_title