

Cloth Face Coverings Guidance During COVID-19

Summary of May 18, 2021 changes

- Updated information for [fully vaccinated](#) individuals to align with CDC recommendations.

Introduction

Face coverings or masks, along with six feet of physical distancing, significantly slow or stop the spread of COVID-19. If you are not [fully vaccinated](#), it's important to continue to wear face coverings and practice physical distancing in public. When you wear a face covering, you help protect others around you as well as yourself. In responding to this pandemic, we have learned that there are times and places where wearing a face covering can greatly reduce transmission of COVID-19 from person-to-person, saving lives and helping open the economy safely and wisely.

A cloth face covering is anything that completely covers your mouth and nose, and fits securely on the sides of your face and under your chin. It should be made of two or more layers of tightly woven fabric with ties or straps that go around your head or behind your ears. A face shield with a drape can be used by people with developmental, behavioral, or medical conditions that prevent them from wearing a cloth face covering. Face shields with a cloth drape may also be used; including by children in childcare, day camp, and K-12 settings if a cloth face covering is not tolerated. In the workplace, masks or respirators may be required as they are more protective than cloth face coverings.

Guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [recommends strategies](#) to improve mask fitting to more effectively slow the spread of COVID-19. These strategies include wearing a cloth mask over a medical procedure mask, knotting the ear loops of a medical procedure mask, using a mask fitter, or using a nylon covering over a mask. In addition, DOH does not recommend the use of masks with exhalation valves or vents, or single layer bandanas and gaiters. Respirators with exhalation valves may be used in accordance with guidance published by DOH and [L&I](#).

Current Mandates and Health Orders

There are three public orders that recommend and/or require people to wear face coverings or masks in certain settings:

[The general public order:](#) This order from the secretary of health requires Washingtonians to wear face coverings in public spaces with some exceptions. People are individually responsible to comply with this order.

[The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention order:](#) This order from the CDC requires the wearing of face coverings by travelers to prevent spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. This

order must be followed by passengers on all public transportation including but not limited to airplanes, ships, ferries, trains, subways, buses, taxis, and ride-shares. Operators of public transportation must require all passengers to wear face coverings when boarding, disembarking, and for the duration of travel. More information can be found on the [CDC's webpage for Legal Authorities](#).

The workplace order: Washington employers are required to ensure workers are wearing face coverings at work in almost all situations. Employers must provide face coverings if workers do not have them; employers are responsible to comply with this order, and the Department of Labor & Industries enforces it.

When You've Been Fully Vaccinated

People are considered fully vaccinated:

- 2 weeks after their second dose in a 2-dose series, like the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or
- 2 weeks after a single-dose vaccine, like Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine.

If it has been less than 2 weeks since your final dose, or if you still need to get your second dose, you are NOT fully protected. Keep taking all [prevention measures](#) until you are fully vaccinated.

Per [CDC recommendations](#), people who are fully vaccinated no longer need to wear face coverings or physically distance outdoors or indoors, except in these settings:

- Health care settings like hospitals, long-term care, or doctor's offices
- Correctional facilities
- Homeless shelters
- Schools

The [federal order](#) requiring masks on public transportation still applies.

Fully vaccinated individuals do not need to quarantine or get tested if identified as a close contact of someone who has COVID-19 unless symptomatic. If symptoms develop, follow [quarantine recommendations](#) and [get tested](#). Residents or employees of group settings, like a correctional or detention facility or group home, should quarantine and get tested if identified as a close contact regardless of vaccination status.

Refer to L&I for current information on face covering requirements in the workplace. Businesses retain the right to require masks in their establishments for staff and/or customers, and to ask for proof of vaccination.

Please visit [DOH's webpage on face coverings](#) for a complete list of frequently asked questions. Additional information can be found on the [CDC's webpage for face masks](#).

More COVID-19 Information and Resources

Stay up-to-date on the [current COVID-19 situation in Washington](#), [Governor Inslee's proclamations](#), [symptoms](#), [how it spreads](#), and [how and when people should get tested](#). See our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for more information.

A person's race/ethnicity or nationality does not, itself, put them at greater risk of COVID-19. However, data are revealing that communities of color are being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19- this is due to the effects of racism, and in particular, structural racism, that leaves some groups with fewer opportunities to protect themselves and their communities. [Stigma will not help to fight the illness](#). Share accurate information with others to keep rumors and misinformation from spreading.

- [WA State Department of Health 2019 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [WA State Coronavirus Response \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatrics Cloth Face Coverings for Children during COVID-19](#)
- [Find Your Local Health Department or District](#)
- [CDC Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Stigma Reduction Resources](#)
- [Use of Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19 \(CDC\)](#)
- [How to Make An Accessible, Deaf-Friendly Face Mask \(HSDC\)](#)

Have more questions? Call our COVID-19 Information hotline: **1-800-525-0127**

Monday – 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., Tuesday – Sunday and [observed state holidays](#), 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. For interpretative services, **press #** when they answer and **say your language**. For questions about your own health, COVID-19 testing, or testing results, please contact a health care provider.

To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 ([Washington Relay](#)) or email civil.rights@doh.wa.gov.