

FACE COVERINGS

COVID-19 Frequently Asked Question

Thurston County Public Health and Social Services Department (updated 8/27/20)



What are the requirements of the Governor's Face Covering Mandate?

Governor Face Covering Mandate for Employers

Beginning June 8, 2020:

- All employees will be required to wear a cloth facial covering, except when working alone in an office, vehicle, or at a job site, or when the job has no in-person interaction.
- Facial coverings are not required if the individual is deaf or hard of hearing or is communicating with someone who relies on language cues such as facial markers and expression and mouth movements as a part of communication; if the individual has a medical condition or disability that makes wearing a facial covering inappropriate.
- Employers must provide cloth facial coverings to employees, unless their exposure dictates a higher level of protection under the Department of Labor and Industries' safety and health rules and guidance.
- Employees may choose to wear their own facial coverings at work, provided it meets the minimum requirements.
- Employers must post signage at their place of business strongly encouraging customers to wear cloth facial coverings.
- Businesses are encouraged to require customers to wear cloth facial coverings, in order to protect employees from exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace.
- According to L & I Spokesman, the state can cite and fine a business if it doesn't follow the guidance on face coverings.

Statewide Face Covering Mandate

Beginning July 7, 2020:

- Businesses must require face coverings of all customers and may not serve any customer if they do not comply with the statewide face covering mandate.

Beginning July 25, 2020, the Department of Health issued an [order](#) which included the following guidance:

- Everyone must wear a face covering that covers their nose and mouth when they are outside of their house, mobile home, apartment, condominium, hotel or motel room, or other dwelling unit in both public and non-public settings like:
 - Outdoor areas
 - Businesses
 - Government building
 - Healthcare settings
 - Public transportation
 - Elevators
 - Hallways

- Stairways
- Parking garages
- Kitchens
- Lounges
- Lobbies
- Storage areas
- Garbage/recycling area
- Laundry rooms
- Individuals may remove their face covering when leaving their house, mobile home, apartment, condominium, hotel or motel room, or other dwelling unit when:
 - Eating or drinking in a public setting and maintaining physical distance
 - Engaging in indoor or outdoor exercise activities while maintaining 6 feet of physical distance (This may not apply to team sports)
 - While outdoors and maintaining at least 6 feet of distance from members not in your household
 - While engaging in personal hygiene or grooming activities like showering or bathing
 - Communicating with deaf or hard of hearing limits communication
 - While obtaining a service that required the removal of the face covering
 - Sleeping
 - When necessary to confirm the individual's identity
 - When federal or state law prohibits wearing a face covering or requires the removal of a face covering
 - Unable to put on a face covering due to an emergency

Are there any exceptions to wearing a face covering?

Yes, some people are unable to wear a face covering for a variety of reasons. Please be kind to others in the community. Exemptions include:

- Children younger than 2 years old
- Children between the ages of 2-4 are strongly recommended to use cloth face coverings, but not required
- People who have disabilities that:
 - Prevent them from comfortably wearing or taking off face coverings
 - Prevent them from communicating while wearing face coverings
- People who have respiratory conditions or breathing trouble
- People who have been told by a medical, legal, or behavioral health professional not to wear a face covering

Do face coverings really work?

Yes, face coverings help prevent the spread of COVID 19. Because COVID-19 is a novel virus, we are learning more as we go. In the beginning, face coverings weren't recommended. But starting in April, both the CDC and the [Thurston County Health Officer began advising](#) the use of face coverings because they help protect others from being exposed to droplets of people who may not know they have COVID-19 spread of COVID-19. On June 26, 2020, the State Secretary of Health issued an [order](#) mandating face coverings.

The CDC confirmed that many people who are infected show no symptoms, so they do not know they are sick. Unfortunately, this means people can contribute to the spreading of the disease in the community. Wearing a face covering helps prevent spread from happening. It provides an extra layer of protection to stop respiratory droplets from traveling in the air and onto other people. You can learn more on the science [here](#).

What kind of face coverings work?

Finding the right kind of face covering is important. No one wants to be uncomfortable. Find something that works for you.

Your face covering doesn't have to be a mask. You can use fabric cloth face masks, scarves, and bandana coverings or [other material as recommended by the CDC](#). Please do not use N95 masks, these are for healthcare providers.

What if I have a medical issue or disability that prevents me from using a cloth face covering or mask for work?

The Washington State Department of Labor and Industries guidelines states, employees with medical or disability issues preventing mask use should provide their medical professional's accommodation statement specifying that facial covering or masks should not be worn to their employer.

How do I communicate while wearing a face covering with someone who is deaf or hard of hearing?

When communicating with people who are deaf or hard of hearing, workers may unmask to aid in reading facial cues and lip-reading while ensuring at least 6 feet of distance or have a physical barrier between them. The employer should then assess their needs and make appropriate adjustments to work rules to accommodate the employee. Americans with Disability Act (ADA) accommodation processes should generally be followed, particularly when a solution is not obvious or may impact other workers. Adjustments to rules and the workplace may be necessary to ensure a safe and healthy workplace for all workers. You can find more information at the Washington State Department of [Labor and Industries](#).

Is there a penalty for not wearing a face covering?

Not following the order may result in a misdemeanor charge. This could be a fine of up to \$100 and/or up to 90 days in county jail.

When should I wear a face covering?

Wear a face covering when leaving your house. Examples of when to wear a face covering may include:

- Going to any business
- In healthcare settings, like a hospital, pharmacy, clinic, or doctor's office
- When you are in line or waiting for public transportation
- When you ride in a taxi, private car service, ride-sharing vehicle, or any other vehicle for hire

- At a restaurant and only take it off when eating or drinking
- You are not able to keep 6 feet distance from people who are not household members
- Outdoor public places, like a park, trails, or recreation area where you can't keep a physical distance of 6 feet from people
- Common spaces in apartment buildings, condos, fraternity/sorority houses, assisted living facilities, hotel and motels like elevators, kitchens, laundry rooms, hallways, lobbies, etc.

Do I need to wear a face covering while on a walk or in parks?

It depends. If you are within 6 feet of people other than members of your household, then you should wear a face covering. If you are out in your neighborhood walking and not within 6 feet of other people then it isn't required, but you may want to have a mask in your pocket depending on the space you are in.

Should I do something if someone near me isn't wearing a face covering?

No. Some individuals have conditions or circumstances that make wearing a mask difficult or dangerous. Concentrate on keeping 6 feet of physical distance and wash your hands often.

Is my employer required to provide me with a face covering for work?

The Governor's [Safe Start Plan](#) requires employers to provide the protective gear required for their employees to do business. You can find more information at the Washington State Department of [Labor and Industries](#).

How can I make my own face covering?

Our public health partners at Seattle-King County devoted an [entire blog post](#) to creative ideas for making a face covering. The [CDC also offers directions](#) for making your own mask.

How do I care for my face covering?

You should wash your face covering after each use. Wash it in your washing machine. You can include it with your regular laundry. Wash it on the warmest setting appropriate for the fabric.

If you are washing your mask by hand, follow [this information](#).

Make sure to completely dry your face covering before using.

Before and after you put on your cloth face covering, you should clean your hands either with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer or with soap and water.

Are face covering required for youth outdoor sports?

Face coverings are not required for youth when exercising or playing sports (whether training or in a game). Face coverings should be worn when on the sidelines, benches, or dugouts. They should also be worn when using shared transportation with people outside of the household.

If in-person learning occurs in schools, do children have to wear a face covering?

Yes, face coverings are required by the State Department of Health [K-12 Schools – Fall 2020-2021 Guidance](#). If a child is not able to wear a face covering, a face shield is an alternative option. There

are some exceptions for children who do not need to wear face coverings. Please review the guidance [here](#).

Contact Information

Thurston County Public Health and Social Services Department

- Phone: 360-867-2500
- WA Relay: 711 or 800-833-6338
- COVID-19 Webpage: <http://bit.ly/ThurstonCOVID-19>