



NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Frequently Asked Questions on Cloth Face Coverings June 26, 2020

Q. Why do I need to wear a cloth face covering?

A. Covering your face is about protecting other people. By covering your face when you are out in public settings, you are being a good neighbor and helping your community stay healthy.

There is growing evidence that the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) can spread between people in close contact – through actions like coughing, sneezing and talking- even when they are not showing symptoms. Wearing a face covering is another step that may help reduce the spread, especially for those who are sick but may not know it.

Face coverings are not a replacement for other evidence-based measures such as physical distancing, and frequent hand washing practices.

Q. When should I wear a cloth face covering?

A.

You should wear face coverings when in public places, particularly when those locations are indoors or in other areas where physical distancing is not possible.

Certain businesses are required to have patrons and employees wear face coverings whether they are inside or outside when they are or may be within six (6) feet of another person, or unless an exception applies.

These businesses must follow the requirements for face coverings as described in Executive Order 147. These businesses, to the extent they are open are:

- Retail Businesses;
- Restaurants
- Personal Care, Grooming, and Tattoo Businesses;
- Child Care Facilities, Day Camps, and Overnight Camps;
- Gyms, Exercise Facilities, and Fitness Facilities,
- State Government Cabinet Agencies;
- Transportation;
- Certain High-Density Occupational Settings Where Social Distancing is Difficult, including manufacturing settings, construction sites, meat processing, and migrant farm or other farm settings;
- Long Term Care Facilities
- Other Health Care Settings

Q. Are there exceptions to the face covering requirements?

A. Yes, face coverings do not need to be worn by an individual, worker, customer or patron who:

1. Has a medical or behavioral condition or disability and cannot wear a face covering (including, but not limited to, any person who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious or incapacitated, or is otherwise unable to put on or remove the face covering without assistance);
2. Is under eleven (11) years of age;
3. Is actively eating or drinking;
4. Is strenuously exercising or swimming;
5. Is seeking to communicate with someone who is hearing-impaired in a way that requires the mouth to be visible;
6. Is giving a speech for a broadcast or to an audience;
7. Is working at home or alone in a vehicle;
8. Is temporarily removing his or her Face Covering to secure government or medical services or for identification purposes;
9. Would be at risk from wearing a Face Covering at work, as determined by local, state, or federal regulators or workplace safety guidelines;
10. Has found that his or her Face Covering is impeding visibility to operate equipment or a vehicle; or
11. Is a child whose parent, guardian, or responsible person has been unable to place the Face Covering safely on the child's face.
12. Children under two (2) years of age should not wear a face covering.

Q. Do I still need to stay at least six (6) feet away from people if I am wearing a cloth face covering?

A. Yes. Wearing cloth face coverings is an additional public health measure to reduce the spread of COVID-19. It is still recommended that you stay at least six (6) feet away from other people and frequently wash your hands or use hand sanitizer. A cloth face covering is not intended to protect the wearer, but it may prevent the spread of virus from the wearer to others. This is especially important if someone is infected but does not have symptoms.

Q. Do I need to wear a face covering while exercising outdoors?

A. No. If you are able to safely maintain at least six (6) feet distance from others, you do not need to wear a face covering when exercising outdoors.

Q. Should children wear cloth face coverings?

A

Yes, it is recommended that children over the age of two wear a cloth face covering if they can reliably wear, remove, and handle cloth face coverings throughout the day, unless there is an exception, see question above. Cloth face coverings should NOT be put on babies and children under the age of 2 because of danger of suffocation.

Q. What kind of face covering should I use?

A. People should wear cloth face coverings that cover the nose and mouth. Surgical Masks, Procedure Masks, and N95 respirators are not recommended for general public use or use in community settings, as these should be reserved for specific high-risk occupational settings, healthcare providers and other medical first responders in a health care setting.

Q. Where can I get a cloth face covering?

A. While cloth face coverings are being sold by a range of retailers and available to purchase online, you can also make them at home from regular household items. CDC has released [resources](#) on how to make a face covering from items like bandanas and t-shirts. A [video](#) showing the steps is also available.

Q. How do I take care of my cloth face covering?

A. It is a good idea to wash your cloth face covering frequently, ideally after each use, or at least daily. Have a bag or bin to keep cloth face coverings in until they can be laundered with detergent and hot water and dried on a hot cycle. If you must re-wear your cloth face covering before washing, wash your hands immediately after putting it back on and avoid touching your face. 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

Q. How do I safely adjust or remove a used cloth face covering?

A. Be careful not to touch your eyes, nose, and mouth when removing or adjusting a face covering and wash hands immediately after removing or adjusting.

Q. What if I am worried about being profiled or being subjected to bias if I wear a cloth face covering?

A. While it is encouraged that you wear a face covering, it is not required, and individuals must determine themselves whether they are comfortable and feel safe wearing one in public. Some populations may experience increased anxiety and fear of bias and being profiled wearing face coverings in public spaces, but everyone should adhere to this guidance without fear of profiling or bias. If someone is the target of ethnic or racial intimidation as the result of adhering to the face covering provision or as a result of the pandemic, they are encouraged to report the matter to law enforcement or other government entity.

Q. What if I am a person with, or I support someone with a disability and cannot or simply will not wear a face covering?

A. It may be scary for individuals to have cloth placed over their face if they do not understand why or if they have trouble with breathing. Some individuals may have sensitivity to having something placed over their face. Providing clear education about the reasons to wear a face covering, giving encouragement, and modeling the use of a face covering are good rules of thumb when helping someone. It may also be helpful to practice wearing a face covering for short time periods or limiting the amount of time it is worn. If an individual is unable to wear a cloth face covering or will not tolerate using a cloth face covering, it may be necessary to use a scarf or other wrap. A person should not be forced to use a cloth face covering, but, instead, other steps should be taken to help the individual avoid unnecessary exposure.

Q. What if I am a person with hearing loss and am concerned about not being able to read lips?

A. Deaf and Hard of Hearing people often use lipreading to help understand what those around them are saying. Without being able to lipread, other communication techniques need to be used to help with communication. Some solutions to improve communication include: find a cloth face covering that has a clear plastic area that allows the lips to be visible (there are a number of options out there), increase your distance, write notes back and forth, write on a white board to communicate, use a free speech to text app on your mobile device and allow the person to read what you speak, gesture and if needed step several additional feet back from the person and remove your face cloth face covering just long enough to communicate.

Q. How well do cloth face coverings work to prevent spread of COVID-19?

A. Scientific evidence suggests that use of cloth face coverings by the public during a pandemic can help reduce disease transmission. Cloth face coverings can reduce the release of infectious particles into the air when someone speaks, coughs, or sneezes. Cloth face coverings are not a substitute for staying six (6) feet apart, washing hands, and staying home when ill.