



Guidance on the Use of Masks by the General Public

SARS-CoV-2 is a novel coronavirus that has emerged and caused coronavirus disease (abbreviated as COVID-19). Public health experts continue to learn about COVID-19, but based on current data and similar coronaviruses, the virus is believed to be spread between close contacts via respiratory droplets or contact with contaminated surfaces. While staying home, social distancing, and strict hand hygiene are still preferred methods for preventing further spread of COVID-19, facemasks or face coverings are one more tool that may be used by the general public and essential workers to protect each other from respiratory droplets produced when they cough, sneeze, or talk.

Per Executive Order, any individual who is over age two (2) and able to medically tolerate a face covering (a mask or cloth face covering) shall be required to cover their nose and mouth with a face covering when in a public place or working and they are unable to maintain a six (6) foot social distance. Face coverings are specifically required in public indoor spaces such as stores.

Exceptions can be made for people with medical conditions or disabilities that prevent them from safely wearing a face-covering. More information about reasonable accommodations is available from the Illinois Department of Human Rights' [FAQ for Businesses Concerning Use of Face-Coverings During COVID-19](#).

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain, especially in areas of significant community-based transmission. CDC advises the use of simple cloth face coverings to slow the spread of the virus and help people who may have the virus and do not know it from transmitting it to others.

The most effective measures for preventing further spread of COVID-19, however, remain staying home when you are sick, maintaining physical separation between other people while out in public (at least 6 feet), and frequently washing your hands with either soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.

When to Wear a Mask

Examples of when a face covering is required in public places include but are not limited to:

- Shopping at essential businesses, like grocery stores and farmers' markets, pharmacies, office supply stores, hardware stores, greenhouses, garden centers, and nurseries.
- Picking up food from the drive-through, curbside pickup, or carryout.
- While visiting your health care provider.
- Traveling on public transportation.

- Interacting with customers, clients, or coworkers, including both essential businesses and stores that are only open for curbside pickup and delivery.
- Performing essential services for government agencies where close interactions with other people are unavoidable.

Those who are staying home and have no close contacts that are infected with COVID-19 don't need a mask while at home. Provided you do so alone or with close household contacts, other situations that don't require a mask or face covering include outdoor activities on your own property.

Best Practices for Homemade Masks or Face Coverings

Best practices for making and wearing homemade masks include:

- Using materials available at home or buying materials online to avoid exposure in public places.
- Purchasing masks made by small businesses, saving medical masks for health care workers and potentially helping the local economy. Wash and dry new masks or face coverings before using them for the first time.
- Making masks from materials that will hold up to daily washing and drying.
- Having more than one mask per person so they can be laundered daily. This will also be helpful if your mask becomes wet, damaged, or no longer fits and you need to replace it.
- Washing your hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water before putting on a mask, immediately after removing it, or if you touch the mask while using it.
- The mask should fit snugly around your mouth and nose. A metal wire sewn or built into the mask will help it conform to the bridge of your nose.
- Avoiding touching the mask while using it. If you do touch it, wash your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub.
- Whether you use cotton fabrics, paper-based shop towels, or other materials, try to strike a balance between the materials you already have at home, how easy it will be to breathe while wearing the mask for extended periods away from home, and whether or not you would prefer to craft a new mask every day (paper) or wash and reuse your mask(s). There are relatively few studies of the effectiveness of masks made from homemade materials.
- Replacing your mask when wet, damaged or it no longer fits your face. Masks should not be worn damp or when wet from spit or mucus.
- Try to avoid touching the outer surface of the mask when removing it. Remove the mask by untying it or unfastening the ear loops. Place it in a bag or bin away from small children or pets until it can be laundered.

This does not replace but enhances other IDPH guidance concerning social distancing and universal masking in congregate living facilities.

How do I care for my mask?

If made of materials that can be laundered, it's a good idea to wash your mask or face covering at least daily. Place your used masks in a bag or bin away from small children or pets until they can be laundered with detergent and dried on a hot cycle. If you need to remove and reuse your mask before washing, consider putting it in a plastic or paper bag (not your backpack or purse) and be mindful not to put the mask where others can touch it or where the mask will contaminate other, shared surfaces. Wash your hands immediately after putting it back on and avoid touching your face.

Paper-based masks, like those crafted from shop towels, should be discarded after each use.

How can I make my own mask or face covering?

There are several online resources, including the following, with instructions for making homemade masks and face coverings from cloth fabric or paper. You may even be able to use a 3D Printer with open source designs if you have one at home.

CDC DIY Cloth Face Coverings – <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>

CDC Recommendations for Cloth Face Covers – <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>

U.S. Surgeon General How to Make Your Own Face Covering (YouTube) – <https://youtu.be/tPx1yqvJgf4>
CDC Cloth Face Covers FAQ – <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-faq.html>

Pennsylvania Department of Public Health Guidance on Homemade Masks during COVID-19 – <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/Documents/Diseases%20and%20Conditions/Homemade%20Mask%20Guidance.pdf>

California Department of Public Health – <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Face-Coverings-Guidance.aspx>

Minnesota Department of Health Interim Guidance on Alternative Facemasks – <http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/masksalt.pdf>

New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Face Coverings FAQ – <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/imm/covid-19-face-covering-faq.pdf>

National Institutes of Health 3D Print Exchange – <https://3dprint.nih.gov/collections/covid-19-response>

Easy No-Sew Shop Towel Mask (YouTube) – <https://youtu.be/mai-UqdNRi8>

Coronavirus Tips: How to make a mask without sewing (YouTube) – <https://youtu.be/t7oE65D4jGkCoron>

Tips on Properly Wearing and Re-using a Facemask

Minnesota Department of Health: Donning and Doffing Facial Protection – Mask Alone (YouTube): <https://youtu.be/OABvzu9e-hw>

Nebraska Medicine: Proper Donning & Doffing of Procedural and Surgical Masks (YouTube) – <https://youtu.be/z-5RYKLYvaw>

North Dakota Department of Health: Procedure Guidance for N95 and Facemask Reuse: https://www.health.nd.gov/sites/www/files/documents/Files/MSS/coronavirus/Facemask_And_N95_Reuse_Guide.pdf

OhioHealth: Donning and Doffing Face Masks (YouTube) – https://youtu.be/o_k7VBV3czw

Sarasota Memorial Health Care System: Mask wearing 101: How to Properly Use and Re-use a Mask (YouTube) – <https://youtu.be/JwPWdkbyizw>

Additional Resources

Executive Order 2020-32 – <https://www2.illinois.gov/Pages/Executive-Orders/ExecutiveOrder2020-32.aspx>

Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity: Essential Business Questions – <https://www2.illinois.gov/dceo/Pages/EssentialBusiness.aspx>

Illinois Department of Natural Resources: Parks Open for Limited Use during COVID-19 – <https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/closures/Pages/ParksOpenDuringCoVID19.aspx>

This guidance was adapted from universal masking guidance available from the Pennsylvania Department of Public Health, California Department of Public Health, and New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.