



Cloth Face Coverings and Masks FAQ

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

Cloth face coverings can reduce the release of virus particles into the air when a person with COVID-19 speaks, coughs, or sneezes. You can help prevent the spread of COVID-19 by wearing a cloth face covering, even if you don't think you have COVID-19. Cloth face coverings are not a substitute for physical distancing, washing hands, and staying home when ill, but they may be helpful when combined with these actions.

2. How do we know face coverings are effective?

Before the pandemic, there was not much research about the benefit of wearing cloth face coverings to prevent COVID-19. Some researchers compared countries that promoted face coverings as part of their early response to countries, like the US, that did not. The countries that promoted face coverings ended up with fewer cases than the countries that did not. Research is continuing and we are still learning more, but we now know that COVID-19 can be spread by people who do not know they have it. The virus that causes COVID-19 is likely spread by droplets you exhale as you breathe, as well as when you talk, sing, cough or sneeze. If you wear a face covering, you will help keep those droplets to yourself.

3. Where does the statewide face covering requirement apply?

a) In indoor public settings, including:

I. Inside any building, including any business open to the public;

II. **In healthcare settings including, but not limited to, a hospital, pharmacy, medical clinic, laboratory, physician or dental office veterinary clinic or blood bank; and**

III. While in line to enter one of the above, or while waiting for or riding on public transportation or paratransit or while in a taxi, private car service, or ride-sharing vehicle.

b) In outdoor public settings, including public parks, trails, streets, and recreation areas, when six feet of physical distancing cannot be maintained between individuals who do not share a household.

4. Why did Washington state issue a mandate rather than rely on voluntary compliance for face coverings?

Starting in April, the CDC and DOH recommended cloth face coverings to help control the spread of respiratory droplets and the virus. While some people voluntarily adopted face coverings, many in Washington did not. This mandate recognized the importance of cloth face coverings as a key strategy to reduce transmission of COVID-19, especially as we continue to reopen our economy and return to public life.



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5. Are there exemptions to who has to wear a face covering?

<https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/NovelCoronavirusOutbreak2020COVID19/ResourcesandRecommendations/ClothFaceCoveringsandMasks/ClothFaceCoveringsandMasksFAQ>

6. Are there times I can remove my face covering?

Yes. You can take off your face covering to eat, drink, or communicate with someone who is deaf or hard of hearing.

7. When do I not have to wear a face covering?

You do not need to wear a cloth covering when you are in your own home or in your car, if you are only with people in your own household. You also do not need to wear a cloth face covering when you are exercising outdoors and you have plenty of space. It's a good idea to keep one in your pocket, though, in case you come across other people you can't stay six feet away from. And some people may have health conditions or circumstances that make wearing a cloth face covering difficult or dangerous.

8. How long will the order be in effect?

Right now, the order is effective indefinitely.

9. What's the penalty for not wearing a face covering?

We hope most people will wear a face covering to protect the health of their friends and loved ones. However, not following the order may result in a misdemeanor subjecting the violator to a fine of up to \$100 and/or up to 90 days in the county jail per RCW 43.70.130(7), RCW 70.05.120(4), and WAC 246-100-070(3).