

FACE COVERING GUIDELINES

These guidelines, as updated, are effective November 17, 2020 in Saint Louis County. In accordance with the Saint Louis County Department of Public Health's ("DPH") Second Amended Order Requiring Members of the Public and Employees to Wear Face Coverings, dated November 12, 2020 and effective November 17, 2020, these guidelines may be replaced or modified by DPH based on new scientific information and local information including the trajectory of influenza-like illnesses, cases of COVID-19, and any other information deemed relevant to protect public health in the county.

[Face Coverings Required Poster](#)

Substantial scientific evidence shows that one of the most effective protections to decrease the transmission of COVID-19 is to increase the use of face coverings. Activities and interactions can be resumed in the safest way possible when face coverings are combined with physical distancing and other health and safety practices like hand-washing and regular disinfection processes.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC") continues to study the spread of COVID-19. Its research has determined that a significant number of individuals with COVID-19 lack symptoms and that even those who eventually develop symptoms can transmit the virus to others before showing symptoms. This means that the virus can spread between people interacting in close proximity even if those people are not exhibiting symptoms.

Wearing face coverings when outside the home and in any place of private or public accommodation where social distancing of at least six feet (6') is not feasible will protect the person wearing the face covering and others they encounter, especially those most vulnerable to COVID-19 with underlying medical conditions.

Given significant increases in community transmission of COVID-19, these guidelines have been updated to require Face Coverings whenever an individual is interacting with someone outside of their own household. Gatherings in any public or private space is a high-risk activity, a frequent source of transmission, and is not encouraged. Whenever you are outside your home and around others who do not live with you, you should wear a face covering.

When must face coverings be worn?

Generally, you must wear a face covering whenever you are around other people who are not members of your household.

You will not be allowed to go into a business or use public transportation if you are not wearing a face covering.

Anyone over the age of 5 should wear a face covering whenever they leave their home.

Anyone over the age of 5 who interacts with others outside of their own household should wear a face covering.

Children attending an educational institution in grades kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12) must wear a face covering.

If a child is under the age of 6 and attending kindergarten, the child must wear a face covering while attending school.

You should wear a face covering while working out at a gym or other fitness facility even while physically exerting yourself.

Face coverings ARE required in all the following situations:

- Waiting to be seated at an restaurant, food establishment, or whenever you leave your table (you don't need to wear it while eating or drinking at your table). It is highly recommended that you wear a face covering while interacting with any service personal that serves your table.
- Going into a restaurant or other facility to pick up a to go order or to use the public facilities.
- Waiting in a line to enter a grocery store or any other retail facility.
- Shopping in a store.
- On public transportation (or waiting for it to arrive).
- Driving or riding in a taxi or rideshare vehicle (even by yourself).
- Seeking health care.
- Going into any other facilities that are open to the public, like laundromats, banks, and government buildings.
- In a common area inside a building, like an elevator, hallway, stairway, or parking structure.
- Working at a job where you interact with others.
- Going into someone else's home for work, such as providing a service like cleaning or maintenance.
- Walking outside on a sidewalk or path where other people may also be walking.

Face coverings are NOT required for children while attending school when they are:

- At recess or in physical education class, as long as students are at least 6 feet apart;
- Participating in band, choir, or music class, as long as students are at least 6 feet apart;
- Consuming food or drink, as long as students are at least 6 feet apart; and
- Not required to do so in accordance with DPH's Youth Sport Guidelines while actively participating in a school sponsored sport. Seated on a bench is not considered actively participating.

Face coverings are NOT required in all the following situations:

- At home (unless you are living with someone with a higher risk from COVID-19 – you should wear one for their protection).
- Working alone in a private office or enclosed space (as long as you put on a face covering quickly if someone enters).
- In your car alone or if you're only with people you live with.
- Sitting or standing outside alone or with people you live with (such as picnicking outside) and you are more than 6 feet from others.

- Exercising outdoors alone or with people who live with you (walking, hiking bicycling, or running) and no one else is within 6 feet.
- In the water at a pool.
- Actively playing a sport when you are physically exerting yourself.
- Consuming food or drink in a restaurant or bar while adequately distanced from others.
- Consuming food or drink in any other public location while adequately distanced from others.

You should still have a face covering with you at all times when you are not home. It should be visible and readily accessible when you are exercising. There might be times when you cannot avoid being around other people.

You are not required to wear a face covering at home. But if you or someone in your home is sick, you can use a face covering to reduce exposure. If you live with someone at higher risk from COVID-19, everyone in your household should take care to wear a face covering when around others, if possible.

Certain groups are not required to wear a face covering.

Children

Children under 2 years old must not wear a face covering. There is a risk of suffocation.

Children 3-5 years old may only wear a face covering while supervised by an adult. It is recommended that children between 3-5 years of age wear a face covering, but it is not required, unless the child is attending kindergarten. Supervision requirements may be different based on the age and maturity of the child.

Those with certain health conditions

If you have the following health conditions or safety concerns, you are exempt from the requirement to wear a face covering:

- If you have a health condition that prohibits you from wearing a face covering.
- If you are experiencing difficulty breathing, or are unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the face covering without assistance.
- If you are hearing impaired, or communicating with a person who is hearing impaired, and the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication.
- If you are obtaining a service involving the nose, mouth, or face for which temporary removal of the face covering is necessary to perform the service.
- If you have documentation that establishes that a medical professional has told you not to wear a face covering, you do not have to wear one.

An exemption from wearing a face covering does not mean that a business must allow you entry.

What is a face covering?

A face covering is a device, usually made of cloth, that covers the nose and mouth. It can be made from various types of cloth, fabric, or permeable material, but it should not have holes.

In certain instances when an individual cannot wear a face covering, as described below, a face shield may be worn. A face shield is not a substitute for a face covering when the individual is able to wear a face covering.

A face shield is a device, typically made of clear plastic, that protects the mucous membranes of the eyes, nose, and mouth. A face shield must wrap around the sides of the face and extend below the chin.

Cloth mask-style face coverings are preferred because face shields are not as effective in providing protection to others who come into contact with the person wearing one. A face shield, however, is offered as a reasonable balance between individual health concerns and the need to protect the public.

The following do not comply with the requirement for face coverings:

- Halloween or plastic masks.
- Ski masks with holes for the nose or mouth.
- Masks that have a one-way valve designed for easier breathing (the valves are often a raised plastic disk about the size of a quarter, on the front or side of the mask). Holes or one-way valves allow droplets out of the mask, putting others nearby at risk.

How should a face covering be worn?

The fabric should cover your nose and mouth.

Face coverings can be made of a variety of fabrics. You can use bandanas, scarves, t-shirts, sweatshirts, or towels. The CDC has instructions for making your own covering with or without a sewing machine: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-make-cloth-face-covering.html>

Keep it clean

If you're outside your home and your face covering gets wet, keep wearing it. It will still protect others.

Face coverings should be washed frequently. Ideally, wash them after each use and have a dedicated laundry bag or bin.

Clean your hands before and after touching your face or face covering.

Businesses MUST require face coverings.

Businesses MUST require employees who interact with the public to wear face coverings. Businesses must provide these employees with face coverings or the materials with which to make face coverings.

Employees of businesses who work alone, whether in an enclosed room or outside where 6 feet of distance can be maintained from other individuals, are not required to wear face coverings.

Businesses that are defined as public accommodations under the order must require customers and patrons to wear face coverings to protect their employees and other customers.

Businesses MUST deny entry to the facility to those customers who refuse to wear face coverings. A business, however, shall not require the individual to produce medical documentation verifying a medical condition or ask about the nature of a medical condition.

While an exemption is allowed for persons who declare a health condition that prohibits wearing a face covering, this does not mean that a business can allow entry of a person claiming the health exemption to enter their premises without any face covering. Instead the following options are recommended for the business, in the order of preference:

- Provide a reasonable accommodation for this individual to accomplish their intended purpose for patronizing the business. Curbside service or delivery may fulfill these needs.
- Allow the individual access to the business with a face shield that at a minimum covers the face from the forehead to below the chin and around the sides of the face as a single continuous surface. The shield must be worn during the time needed to conduct business.