

Universal Face Coverings Order FAQ

Why did the Secretary issue this Order?

The Secretary issued this Order to continue to protect all in the Commonwealth from the spread of COVID-19, mindful of the need to slow the increase in the number of cases as the Commonwealth reopens and in order to avoid the resurgence that is overwhelming the health care systems and public health systems in other states who have been less successful in reopening than the Commonwealth.

What type of mask complies with this Order?

The Order requires individuals to wear a “face covering.” “Face covering” means a covering of the nose and mouth that is secured to the head with ties, straps, or loops over the ears or is wrapped around the lower face. A “face covering” can be made of a variety of synthetic or natural fabrics, including cotton, silk, or linen, and, for the purposes of the order, can include a plastic face shield that covers the nose and mouth. “Face coverings” may be factory-made, sewn by hand, or improvised from household items, including but not limited to, scarves, bandanas, t-shirts, sweatshirts, or towels. While procedural and surgical masks intended for health care providers and first responders, such as N95 respirators, would meet these requirements, these specialized masks should be reserved for appropriate occupational and health care settings.

If I’m inside a public place and can maintain social distancing, do I need to wear a mask?

Yes, unless you fit one of the exceptions included in Section 3 of the Order.

Do I have to wear a mask both inside and outside?

The Secretary’s Order requires individuals to wear a face covering, in both indoor public places and in the outdoors when they are not able to consistently maintain social distancing from individuals who are not members of their household, such as on a busy sidewalk, waiting in line to enter a place, or near others at any place people are congregating. Whether inside in a public place or outside, and when wearing a face covering or not, everyone should socially distance at least 6 feet apart from others who are not part of your household.

Do I need to wear a mask when around my family members?

A face covering is not necessary when inside the household with only individuals who are part of the same household as you, or when outdoors and able to consistently maintain social distancing from those who are not part of your household. If you and the individuals who live in your household are around others from outside of your household such as extended family members who do not live in the same household, a face covering is needed. If you and the members of your household are outdoors and 6 feet or further from other individuals such as extended family members, a face covering is not needed. Even if outdoors, exercise caution about situations that could result in closer contact when a face covering would be needed. You should also consider whether other individuals have underlying conditions that might make COVID-19 more serious to them than to others, and under those circumstances be sure to wear a face covering and social distance to protect them.

Does the Order apply to individuals within local government facilities, including court houses and government buildings?

Yes. The Order does apply to individuals inside and outside of local government facilities, court houses, and other government buildings.

Is it acceptable to remove face coverings when high temperatures and humidity may create unsafe conditions, or simply if the weather is very warm?

Individuals must wear face coverings unless wearing a face covering would create an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task. In general, though, face coverings must be worn, even on warm days, if they do not pose a risk to an individual's health or safety. Mere discomfort is not considered a risk to an individual's health or safety.

Face shields are an acceptable alternative to face masks when high temperatures and humidity create unsafe conditions.

I have asthma or another medical condition. Do I have to wear a mask?

Individuals must wear a face covering unless the mask impedes their vision, they have a medical or mental health condition or disability that impedes their ability to wearing of a face covering, particularly one that creates respiratory problems for the individual, or if wearing a face covering would create an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task. A list of the exceptions can be found in [Section 3 of the Order](#). If an individual cannot wear a face covering due to a medical or mental health condition or disability, the individual should consider wearing a face shield.

Persons, including children, with other sensory sensitivities may have challenges wearing a cloth face covering. They should consult with their health care provider for advice about wearing cloth face coverings and may consider wearing a face shield.

An individual does not need to provide documentation that the individual fits within an exception to the Order.

Wearing my mask makes my skin break out. Do I have to wear a mask?

Acne is a medical condition that, in some instances, can be serious. Anyone who has only a mild or moderate reaction must continue to wear a face covering and these persons may consider wearing a face shield. Individuals should consult with their health care provider for advice about wearing face coverings if their acne is considered a serious medical condition.

When does my child have to wear a mask?

Children 2 years old and older are required to wear a face covering as described in the Order, unless you fit one of the exceptions included in Section 3 of the Order.

If a child is outdoors and able to consistently maintain a social distance of at least 6 feet from individuals who are not a part of their household, they do not need to wear a mask.



If a parent, guardian, or responsible person has been unable to place a face covering safely on the child's face, they should not do so.

If a child 2 years old or older is unable to remove a face covering without assistance, the child is not required to wear one.

The Department recognizes that getting younger children to be comfortable wearing face coverings and to keep them on may create some difficulties. Under these circumstances, parents, guardians, licensed child care providers in community-based and school settings or responsible persons may consider prioritizing the wearing of face coverings to times when it is difficult for the child to maintain a social distance of at least 6 feet from others who are not a part of their household (e.g., during carpool drop off or pick up, or when standing in line at school). Ensuring proper face covering size and fit and providing children with frequent reminders and education on the importance and proper wearing of cloth face coverings may help address these issues.

Do staff and children in child care facilities need to wear face coverings?

All staff must wear face coverings during child care operations.

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Any child who cannot wear a face covering due to a medical condition, including those with respiratory issues that impede breathing, a mental health condition, or disability, and children who would be unable to remove a face covering without assistance, are not required to wear face coverings. Individuals who are communicating or seeking to communicate with someone who is hearing impaired or who has another disability, where the ability to see the mouth is essential to communication, also are not required to wear a mask. Other face coverings, such as plastic face shields, may also accommodate such disabilities.

Children do not need to wear face coverings if they are outdoors and able to maintain a distance of 6 feet from individuals who are not members of their household.

Does the Order of the Secretary of the PA Department of Health Requiring Universal Face Coverings apply to children and adults while in schools?

Yes, this order applies to all individuals while in school entities, including public K-12 schools, brick and mortar and cyber charter schools, private and parochial schools, career and technical centers (CTCs), intermediate units (IUs); educational programming for students in non-educational placements such as residential settings (boarding schools), residential facilities, detention centers, and hospital settings; PA



Pre-K Counts, Head Start Programs and Preschool Early Intervention programs; and Private Academic Nursery Schools and locally funded prekindergarten activities.

For the safety of students, staff and families and to avoid community spread of COVID-19, students and staff are considered to be members of the public who are congregating in indoor locations. As such, they are required to adhere to this Order.

The order is effective immediately and applies to all children aged two and older.

Under what circumstances are students permitted to remove their face coverings (e.g. masks and face shields)?

Schools may allow students to remove their face coverings when students are:

- 1. Eating or drinking when spaced at least 6 feet apart;*
- 2. Seated at desks or assigned work spaces at least 6 feet apart; or*
- 3. Engaged in any activity at least 6 feet apart (e.g. face covering breaks, recess, etc.).*

Do students with disabilities need to wear face coverings?

Any student who cannot wear a mask or face shield due to a medical condition, including those with respiratory issues that impede breathing, a mental health condition, or disability, and students who would be unable to remove a mask without assistance are not required to wear face coverings. Individuals who are communicating or seeking to communicate with someone who is hearing impaired or who has another disability, where the ability to see the mouth is essential to communication, are not required to wear a mask; however, individuals should consider using another type of face covering such as a plastic face shield.

Do I need to wear a mask while walking my dog? Going for a run in the park?

If doing a solitary activity outside that is not likely to result in being within 6 feet of another person, you are not required to wear a face covering. Individuals should consider carrying a face covering in case they unexpectedly come in close contact with others.

Do I need to wear my mask at the pool?

People should not wear cloth face coverings while engaged in activities that may cause the cloth face covering to become wet, like when swimming at the beach or pool. A wet cloth face covering may make it difficult to breathe. For activities like swimming, it is particularly important to maintain physical distance from others when in the water. People must wear face coverings while out of the water and maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet from others who are not a part of their household.

Does the Order apply to athletes and sports activities?

Yes. Everyone must wear a face covering, such as a mask, unless they fall under an exception listed in Section 3 of the Order. Coaches, athletes and spectators must wear face coverings, unless they are outdoors and can consistently maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet. Athletes are not required to



wear face coverings while actively engaged in workouts and competition that prevent the wearing of face coverings, but must wear face coverings when on the sidelines, in the dugout, etc. and anytime 6 feet of social distancing is not possible.

Does the Order require individuals to wear masks when they are exercising indoors at a health club?

Yes, everyone must wear a face covering unless they fall under an exception listed in Section 3 of the Order.

Do I have to wear a mask if alone in my workplace or office?

Individuals engaged in work, whether at the workplace or performing work off-site, when interacting in-person with any member of the public, working in any space visited by members of the public, working in any space where food is prepared or packaged for sale or distribution to others, working in or walking through common areas, or in any room or enclosed area where other people, except for members of the person's own household, are present must wear a face covering when unable to physically distance. However, employees isolated in their personal office space, which is not shared with any other individual and at least 6 feet apart from another person do not need to wear a face covering. Additionally, a face covering is not required while eating or drinking. While eating or drinking, social distancing techniques and other public health best practices such as hand hygiene should be applied.

I see the people remove their masks while making public speeches. Isn't that a violation of the Order?

Individuals speaking for a broadcast or to an audience may remove their face coverings while speaking, so long as they are social distancing during the speech or broadcast. Those persons in attendance, including employees of the venue, and any person speaking must social distance during, before and after the speech or broadcast.

Do I have to wear a mask at a restaurant, bar, or private club?

Yes, individuals who are seated at a restaurant or other establishment that offers food or beverage service need to wear a mask face covering until such time as they are eating or drinking.

Do I have to wear a mask at the dentist? At a medical appointment related to my nose?

Individuals obtaining a service – medical or otherwise – involving the nose or face for which temporary removal of the face covering is necessary to perform the service are allowed to temporarily remove their face covering to obtain the service.

Does my ride-share vehicle driver and non-household ride-share vehicle passenger need to wear a mask?

Yes.

What happens if I don't wear a mask?

*The wearing of face coverings, such as a mask, ensures that we as a society can limit the spread of COVID-19 and successfully combat this pandemic; therefore, it is in **everyone's** best interest that all Pennsylvanians comply with this Order. As this is a legal order under the Disease Prevention and Control*



Law, law enforcement officers are authorized to issue warnings or citations for those not complying with the Order.

Your mask protects others around you and their masks protect you. By wearing a face covering such as a mask, you are protecting those closest to you.

Should I report someone not wearing a mask? If so, how do I report them?

Individuals should be cautious reporting individuals who are not wearing a face covering, such as a mask, as individuals may fall under one of the exemptions (including having a medical condition that would preclude them from having to wear a face covering). However, if there is a legitimate concern about a situation of non-compliance with the Order, local law enforcement agencies can be contacted through their non-emergency phone numbers to investigate issues of compliance. Individuals should not confront those who are not wearing face coverings, take enforcement matters into their own hands or put themselves in a dangerous situation.

What if I can't afford a mask?

Face coverings, including masks do not need to be purchased. They may be made with readily available items. See [here](#) for directions on how to make a homemade mask. There are types of "face coverings" other than a mask that may be worn to comply with the Order. Face coverings may be factory-made, sewn by hand, or improvised from household items, including but not limited to, scarves, bandanas, t-shirts, sweatshirts, or towels.

Do individuals experiencing homelessness need to wear a face covering?

Persons experiencing homelessness should, to the greatest extent practicable, practice social distancing, wear face coverings, if possible, and seek community services where available.

Does this apply to residents in Long-Term Care Facilities or other congregate care settings?

Residents of long-term care facilities, hospitals, correctional settings or other congregate care settings should follow any guidance specifically issued by the department or agency that regulates them for specific masking guidance.

Do businesses need to deny entry to those not wearing a face covering such as a mask?

Yes, however, if a business provides medication, medical supplies, or food, that business must offer another means for the customer to purchase goods if the customer is unable to wear a face covering, such as a mask. Those means could include home delivery or contactless curbside pick-up. Other businesses besides those that provide medication, medical supplies, or food should consider providing services through home delivery or contactless curbside pick-up where possible. The Order does not require a customer to be turned away if the customer fits within an exception to the Order. The Order states that an individual is not required to show documentation that an exception applies.

If the customer is refused service, and if the business is not able to provide a face covering, the business should consider providing information on mask making, distributing "how to" flyers, or sharing information about where masks can be purchased. If a customer is belligerent or aggressive in refusing to wear a mask or other face covering, there is no expectation that an employee should force a customer to comply or put themselves in a potentially dangerous situation.



The Department wants to emphasize that it does not expect businesses to put employees in harm's way. Again, in making a determination about whether or not to comply with the Order, an individual should consider not only his or her right to make that decision, but his or her responsibility to family, friends, and other persons with whom they may contact, and to whom they may spread disease.

Do I have to wear a mask at a house of worship such as a church, synagogue or mosque?

Yes, individuals must wear a face covering in any public place as well as outdoors when they are in a place where people are congregating and they cannot remain 6 feet apart from persons who are not a part of their household. Individuals should consider carrying a face covering in case they unexpectedly come in close contact with others.

Does a disposable face shield suffice in lieu of a mask?

Yes, a disposable face shield that covers the nose and mouth will suffice in lieu of a mask.

How should a manager respond to an employee refusing to wear a mask? Does the masking requirement mean I can refuse them entry?

All employees must wear a face covering, such as a mask in the workplace unless they fall under an exception listed in Section 3 of the Order. The administration does not dictate to employers how they should manage their workforce if an employee refuses to comply with the requirement to wear a face covering.

Are masks required for operations where it would be unsafe to keep masks in place, or if an employee says they have anxiety and any mouth or nose covering can lead to panic attacks or other medical conditions?

Individuals must wear a face covering, such as a mask, unless the face covering impedes their vision, they have a medical or health condition or disability that impedes the wearing of a mask, particularly one that creates respiratory problems for the individual, or if wearing a face covering would create an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task. A list of the exceptions can be found in Section 3 of the Order.

Are masks required while driving for work?

If the person is driving alone throughout the trip, no face covering, such as a mask, is needed in the vehicle; however, should they need to travel through a tollbooth or other drive thru where other persons are present and social distancing of at least 6 feet cannot be accomplished, they must be wearing a face covering.

Does the masking requirement apply to workers who are outdoors, and who engage in heavy physical activity, such as employees of solid waste companies and landscapers?

Yes. Individuals who may come within 6 feet of others who are not a part of their household must wear a face covering, such as a mask unless the face covering impedes their vision, they have a medical or mental health condition or disability that impedes the wearing of a mask, particularly one that creates



respiratory problems for the individual, or if wearing a mask would create an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task. A list of the exceptions can be found in Section 3 of the Order.

Do banks and financial institutions need to comply with the masking requirement if there are associated security concerns with face coverings?

Yes, bank employees must wear face coverings at all times. Customers can be asked to remove their face coverings to reveal their face and then recover their face after the bank employee has identified the customer. This should take place at a social distancing space of at least 6 feet.