



HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Public Health

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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

Requiring Members of the Public and Workers to Wear Face Coverings

Order issued on May 8, 2020

Why did the Health Officer issue this order?

- To reduce the risk of the transmission of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) by an infected person to another person as the covering can reduce the spread of respiratory droplets
- To maximize Inyo County's ability to open local businesses safely

Are cloth face coverings effective?

- A recently released evidentiary review of masking found that requiring the use of masks helps decrease the stigma associated with persons who are ill and increases compliance of all. The study also found that while surgical masks filter more than cloth masks, they both significantly reduce the wearer from infecting those near them by reducing the spread of respiratory droplets
- Cloth face coverings are most effective when combined with physical distancing of 6 feet or more and frequent washing of hands with soap and water

When do I have to wear a mask covering?

- While inside or waiting in line to enter any business or other building where you are likely to encounter other individuals
- When riding on public transit
- When working in an office or other business setting, including reception areas, cashier and checkout areas, public restrooms, service areas and other spaces used to interact with the public, regardless of whether anyone from the public is present at that time
- Working in or walking through common areas such as hallways, stairways, elevators or parking facilities
- When in a space where food is prepared or packaged for sale or distribution to others

When is a face covering not needed?

- At home
- Traveling in your car alone or with members of your household
- Exercising outdoors, like walking, hiking bicycling or running. However, it is recommended that you have a face covering with you and readily accessible in the event you encounter another person and you are unable to maintain 6 feet or more of physical distance (e.g. on a trailhead)
- Face coverings are not indicated for children under the age of 2, anyone who is having trouble breathing or is unconscious, incapacitated, and is otherwise unable to remove the facial covering without assistance or for medical reasons

What if I am in my office by myself or my co-workers are stationed more than 6 feet from me?

- Co-workers positioned in this manner can remove their face coverings while remaining stationary and are required to re-cover if leaving the desk area or if a patron or other employee enters the area
- Workers in single offices may remove their face coverings and should replace them when leaving the office or allowing someone to enter the office

Are cashiers and other workers who have a plastic barrier between them and the patron required to wear a face covering?

- In general, yes. Cloth face coverings are required when providing service to persons within the 6 feet distance range, even with the shield. However, the shield may allow people who are working by themselves to remove the face covering when no patrons are present at the counter

What if I have a medical condition that does not allow me to wear a cloth face covering?

- Consult with your physician to determine if there are alternative recommendations
- Notify your personnel office if you believe your medical condition impacts your ability to comply

What types of coverings can I use?

- Any fabric or cloth that covers the mouth and nose, including coverings made using household items like scarves, bandanas, t-shirts, sweatshirts, towels, turtlenecks, or other fabrics
- Whether homemade or purchased, face coverings should cover your nose and mouth, fit snugly yet comfortably, be secured with ties or ear loops, have sufficient layering, and allow for breathing without restriction

Do I need to buy an N-95 mask?

- No, while medical-grade masks, such as surgical masks and N95 respirators, are included in the definition of a facial covering, persons should refrain from purchasing them as they are critical supplies that must continue to be available to healthcare workers and other emergency responders.

How do I use and care for my face coverings?

- Face coverings should be washed frequently, ideally after each use and preferably in a dedicated laundry bag
- Always wash your hands, or use hand sanitizer, before and after touching your face coverings
- Limit touching your face and face covering

Do I need to wear a face covering when I am walking my dog around the block?

- It is recommended that you carry the face covering with you for ready access and use should you encounter a situation where you are unable to maintain 6 feet of physical distance

How about if I am at the park with members of my household?

- Engaging in these activities without a face covering can occur as long as you are with members of your household
- Cloth face coverings for yourself and all family members should be with you and available at all times

Remember, the use of cloth face coverings is one tool that we can use to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and they are intended to be used in conjunction with 6 feet of physical distancing and frequent handwashing! The general public and especially individuals who are at higher risk of complications from COVID-19 should continue to stay home as much as possible while the State stay-at-home order is in place.