



Placer County Face Covering — FAQ —

*updated June 19, 2020



Is a face covering required?

The Placer County Health Officer has long recommended the use of face coverings in public settings where six feet of physical distance cannot be maintained. As of June 18, the State now requires all Californians to wear masks or cloth face coverings in most settings outside the home. Face coverings are an additional tool that individuals should use to help slow the spread of COVID-19, but wearing a cloth face covering does not eliminate the need to physically distance yourself from others and to wash your hands frequently.

When is it NOT necessary to wear a face covering?

It is not necessary to wear a face covering at home or when in your car alone or with members of your household. You do not need to wear a face covering when exercising outdoors, like walking, hiking, bicycling, or running, if you can maintain six feet of distance from those you don't live with. However people are recommended to have a face covering with them and readily accessible when exercising, even if they're not wearing it at that moment, in case they encounter a situation where distancing is not possible. While it is not possible or necessary to wear a face covering while eating or drinking, wear one before and after doing so.

Who shouldn't wear a face covering?

- Persons age two years or under. These very young children must not wear a face covering because of the risk of suffocation.
- Persons with a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that prevents wearing a face covering. This includes persons with a medical condition for whom wearing a face covering could obstruct breathing or who are unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without assistance.
- Persons who are hearing impaired, or communicating with a person who is hearing impaired, where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication.
- Persons for whom wearing a face covering would create a risk to the person related to their work, as determined by local, state, or federal regulators or workplace safety guidelines.
- Persons who are obtaining a service involving the nose or face for which temporary removal of the face covering is necessary to perform the service.
- Persons who are seated at a restaurant or other establishment that offers food or beverage service, while they are eating or drinking, provided that they are able to maintain a distance of at least six feet away from persons who are not members of the same household or residence.
- Persons who are engaged in outdoor work or recreation such as swimming, walking, hiking, bicycling, or running, when alone or with household members, and when they are able to maintain a distance of at least six feet from others.



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- Persons who are incarcerated. Prisons and jails, as part of their mitigation plans, will have specific guidance on the wearing of face coverings or masks for both inmates and staff.

Read more guidelines from the [California Department of Public Health at covid19.ca.gov](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Face-Coverings.aspx).

What is a cloth face covering?

A cloth face covering is any material that covers the nose and mouth. It can be secured to the head with ties or straps or simply wrapped around the lower face. It can be made of a variety of materials, such as cotton, silk, or linen. A cloth face covering may be factory-made or sewn by hand or can be improvised from household items such as a scarf, T-shirt, sweatshirt, or towel.

When using a cloth face covering, make sure:

- The mouth and nose are fully covered
- The covering fits snugly against the sides of the face so there are no gaps
- You do not have any difficulty breathing while wearing the cloth face covering
- The cloth face covering can be tied or otherwise secured to prevent slipping, so that you do not touch the face covering to make adjustments.
- You wash your hands before and after removing or putting on your face covering
- You wash the face covering regularly

If you plan to use a face covering, it is important to keep your nose and mouth covered. Lowering the covering from your nose and mouth while talking defeats the purpose of wearing the face covering since you can spread virus while you talk.

Can I use an N95 respirator or surgical mask instead?

Purchasing a respirator or face mask intended for the healthcare setting (including N95 respirators and surgical masks) is strongly discouraged. Medical respirators and face masks are considered personal protective equipment (or PPE) and are worn for protection by healthcare staff and those workers who provide care to a person who might have COVID-19. In contrast, the face covering recommended for the general public is intended to prevent COVID-19 transmission to others by someone who might not know they are infected (source control). Since the intent of the face covering is to primarily protect others rather than the person wearing the cover, a medical face mask is not necessary. Medical respirators and face masks are in short supply and are needed to safely provide care for persons with COVID-19, so it is critical that these medical items not be used outside of the healthcare setting.

If you have been using a respirator you already own, you may continue to do so, but N95s with valves are not recommended. A valved N95 does not protect others from any virus you may emit while wearing the respirator.

Why wear a face covering?

“My face covering protects you; your face covering protects me.” Recent information has indicated that covering your nose and mouth can slow the spread of COVID-19 because individuals can be contagious before the onset of symptoms, or even if they never display symptoms. You may be contagious and not know it. If you cover your nose and mouth, it can limit the spread of COVID-19.

A face covering is also a good reminder not to touch your face. Touching your face after touching something contaminated with COVID-19 increases your chances of getting sick with COVID-19.

What should I do when I don't need my face covering temporarily?

If you want to store a face covering between uses on the same day, such as when eating, wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer before and after handling the face covering. You can store a face covering temporarily in a pocket or a bag.

Do NOT place face coverings on counters, computers, etc.

How well do cloth face coverings actually work to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

The primary role of face coverings is to reduce the release of infectious particles into the air when someone speaks, coughs, or sneezes, including someone who has COVID-19 but feels well.

The act of speaking generates droplets that vary widely in size, and these droplets can hold infectious virus particles. It is true that a cloth face covering will not contain every single virus particle. But the science shows* that face coverings can reduce the emission of droplets.

Cloth face coverings are not a substitute for physical distancing and washing hands and staying home when ill, but they may be helpful when combined with these primary interventions.

Why should I cover my face now, when a face covering was not recommended before?

We are learning that individuals may be contagious and spread COVID-19 without their knowledge, even if they do not have symptoms (see [CDC links to studies](#)). This information suggests that a face covering may protect others from infection. Wearing a face covering may help prevent the spread of droplets that might be infectious.

How should I care for a cloth face covering?

It's a good idea to wash your cloth face covering frequently, ideally after each use, or at least daily. Have a bag or bin to store cloth face coverings until they can be laundered with detergent and hot water and dried on a hot cycle. If you must re-wear your cloth face covering before washing, wash your hands immediately after putting it back on and avoid touching your face. Discard cloth face coverings that:

- No longer cover the nose and mouth
- Have stretched out or damaged ties or straps
- Cannot stay on the face
- Have holes or tears in the fabric

How do I make a face covering?

Demonstrations of how to make a face covering may be found at the [website](#) of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

** See these studies ([1](#) and [2](#)) and their included reference lists.*



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