

Face Covering Requirements and Recommendations

Since July 25, 2020, per the [Governor's Executive Order 20-81](#), people in Minnesota are required to wear a face covering in all indoor businesses and public indoor spaces, unless alone. Additionally, workers are required to wear a face covering when working outdoors in situations where social distancing cannot be maintained.

As of Dec. 18, 2020, at 11:59 p.m., Executive Order 20-103 requires face coverings in additional places and situations, including at all times when in a gym or fitness center—including when exercising.

Research has shown that use of face coverings can greatly reduce the risk of infection when combined with other prevention efforts such as social distancing and hand hygiene.

Types of face coverings

- Types of face coverings can include a paper or disposable mask, a cloth mask, a neck gaiter, a scarf, a bandanna, or a religious face covering.
- A face covering must cover the nose and mouth completely. The covering should not be overly tight or restrictive and should feel comfortable to wear.
- Any mask that incorporates a valve that is designed to facilitate easy exhaling, mesh masks, or masks with openings, holes, visible gaps in the design or material, or vents are not sufficient face coverings because they allow droplets to be released from the mask.
- A face covering is not a substitute for social distancing, but is especially important in situations when maintaining at least a 6-foot distance from other individuals who are not members of the same household is not possible.
- It is not known whether face shields (a clear plastic barrier that covers the face) provide the same source control for droplets as face masks, but they may be an option in situations where wearing a face mask is problematic. For optimal protection, the shield should extend below the chin and to the ears, and there should be no exposed gap between the forehead and the shield's headpiece.

- Although medical-grade masks (e.g., surgical face masks, N95 respirators) are sufficient face coverings, members of the public who do not work in health care or an occupation that requires medical-grade protective equipment (e.g., certain construction professions) are discouraged from wearing them as they should be reserved for those workers.

People exempted from the face covering requirement

- Children under age 2 years must not wear face coverings. Children between the ages of 2 and 5 years old are not required to wear face coverings, but are encouraged to wear a face covering when in public if they can do so reliably in compliance with CDC guidance on [How to Wear Cloth Face Coverings](#) (i.e., without frequently touching or removing the face covering).
- People who have medical or other health conditions, disabilities or mental health, developmental, or behavioral needs that make it difficult to tolerate wearing a face covering.
- Any person who has trouble breathing, is unconscious, sleeping, incapacitated, or is otherwise unable to remove the face covering without assistance.
- People at their workplace when wearing a face covering would create a safety hazard to the person or others as determined by local, state, or federal regulators or workplace safety guidelines.
- Alternatives to masks such as clear face shields may be considered for those with health conditions or situations where wearing a mask is problematic. Face shields may also be used as an alternative to face coverings when specifically permitted in the applicable Industry Guidance available at [Stay Safe Minnesota](#).

When it is required to wear a face covering

- In all indoor businesses and public indoor spaces, including when waiting outside to enter the public indoor space or business.
- When riding on public transportation such as buses or trains, or in a taxi, ride-sharing vehicle, or vehicle that is being used for a business purpose.

- For workers only: When working outdoors in situations where social distancing (i.e., maintaining physical distance of at least six feet from other individuals who are not in the same household) cannot be maintained.
- When present in a business, whether indoor or outdoor, that has additional face covering requirements. Businesses are allowed to require face coverings even in situations where face coverings are not otherwise required by Executive Order 20-81.

When a face covering is not required

- When at home or in an assigned room or living unit in a place of temporary lodging (e.g., hotel or motel room) or other place where a person may reside short- or long-term (e.g., shelter, dormitory, residential treatment facility, long-term care facility, correctional facility).
 - However, workers who enter a person's home or assigned living unit for purposes of their job—for example, home health care aides or staff in a residential treatment, long-term care, or correctional facility—must wear face coverings when doing so. Certain facilities—including hospitals, shelters, long-term care facilities, residential programs licensed under Minnesota Statutes chapter 245D, residential treatment facilities, or correctional facilities—may also require visitors and residents, patients, or inmates to wear face coverings even when in a living unit.
- When in a private vehicle being used for private (i.e., non-business) purposes.
- When outdoors or participating in outdoor recreation (e.g., exercising, walking, gardening) for private purposes. However, workers are required to wear face coverings when working outdoors in situations where social distancing cannot be maintained.
- Even in situations where face coverings are not required, all people should carry a face covering to prepare for close interactions with others or to enter an indoor space.

When a face covering can be temporarily removed

- While eating or drinking, if you can maintain 6 feet of physical distance from others who are not a member of the same party.

- When someone asks to verify an identity for lawful purposes, such as when ordering an alcoholic beverage or entering certain events.
- When participating in an activity in which the face covering will get wet. For example, when swimming.
- While communicating with someone who is deaf or hard of hearing, or who has a medical condition, disability, or mental health condition that makes communication with that individual while wearing a mask difficult, provided that social distancing is maintained to the extent possible between people who are not members of the same household.
- While receiving a service—including a dental examination or procedure, medical examination or procedure, or personal care service—that cannot be performed or would be difficult to perform when the individual receiving the service is wearing a face covering.
- When alone, such as when working in an office or a cubicle with walls higher than face level when social distancing is maintained, in an enclosed indoor area, in a vehicle, or in the cab of heavy equipment or machinery. In such situations, people should still carry face coverings to be prepared to wear when no longer alone.
- When testifying, speaking, or performing in an indoor business or public indoor space, in situations or settings such as theaters, news conferences, legal proceedings, governmental meetings subject to the Open Meeting Law (Minnesota Statutes 2019, Chapter 13D), presentations, or lectures, provided that social distancing is always maintained. Face shields should be considered as an alternative in these situations.
- During practices or performances in an indoor business or indoor public space when a face covering cannot be used while playing a musical instrument, provided that social distancing is always maintained.

When it is strongly recommended (but not required) to wear a face covering

- In any outdoor business or public outdoor space when it is not possible to maintain 6 feet of physical distance from others or where close person-to-person interaction is possible or likely, such as when entering or exiting a business, moving around in a space with others present, using the restroom, ordering food, or waiting in line.

- In private social gatherings—for example, when visiting in a private home with friends or relatives that do not reside in the same household—especially when it is not possible to maintain 6 feet of physical distance from others.
- At home, for individuals experiencing symptoms of COVID-19. This will help protect other members of the same household from being infected.
- When at home or in a private vehicle when someone who is not a member of the same household is present, particularly when social distancing cannot be maintained.

Enforcement

While Minnesota expects that businesses and individuals will voluntarily comply with the requirements of this guidance and Executive Order 20-81 to keep their fellow Minnesotans safe, there are consequences for violation of these requirements. These consequences can include petty misdemeanor citations and fines for people, and criminal, civil, and regulatory sanctions for businesses (and their owners and managers).

Where to report concerns with compliance or ask questions

There are people who may not be able to wear face coverings for a variety of reasons and you may not be able to tell why just by looking at a person. Unless you are a business responsible for ensuring worker and customer compliance with the Executive Order, do not report other people to state or local authorities, including law enforcement. If you are a business and need assistance in dealing with a noncompliant customer or visitor, you may wish to contact local law enforcement if you are unable to obtain compliance through other means.