

Mask requirements updated Jan 2022

Because the Delta and Omicron variants are shown to spread more easily, MDH recommends everyone, **both fully vaccinated and unvaccinated**, wear a mask in the following situations:

- **Indoor businesses and public settings and crowded outdoor settings in areas with substantial or high transmission.**
 - **If you are immunocompromised or at an increased risk for severe disease from COVID-19**, consider wearing a mask regardless of the level of transmission in your area. People who are at increased risk for severe disease include older adults and those who have certain medical conditions such as diabetes, overweight or obesity, and heart conditions. Immunocompromised people, even if fully vaccinated, should talk to their health care providers for other specific recommendations.
 - **If you live or frequently interact with someone who is immunocompromised, not fully vaccinated, or at an increased risk for severe disease from COVID-19**, consider wearing a mask in indoor public or crowded outdoor settings regardless of the level of transmission in your area.
- **Where you are in settings that pose a high risk of COVID-19 spread or complications from COVID-19 infection, such as schools, health care settings, homeless shelters, and correctional facilities.**

If you have symptoms of COVID-19, it is important to stay home and away from others. If you must go out (e.g., to go to a medical appointment), wear a mask.

If you have been close to someone with COVID-19, follow recommendations for [COVID-19 testing](#) and [close contacts](#).

- If you are not fully vaccinated or boosted when due, stay home and away from others (quarantine) and wear a mask if other people are around.

- If you are fully vaccinated and boosted when due, or if you had COVID-19 in the past three months, you should wear a mask around others for 10 days following exposure.

Fully vaccinated people may choose to wear a mask in any situation where it feels needed, regardless of whether others around them are masked.

People who are not vaccinated

People who are not vaccinated, including children, are at much higher risk for getting and spreading the virus that causes COVID-19 than those who are fully vaccinated.

In addition to the above recommendations for everyone, anyone who is not fully vaccinated, including children ages 2 and older, should continue to wear well-fitted facemasks in the following settings, regardless of COVID-19 transmission levels:

- Indoor businesses and public settings
- Around people from other households
- Outdoors when social distancing cannot be maintained

When wearing a mask in these situations is impractical or impossible (for example, when eating or drinking, or when presenting or performing in situations where it is necessary for faces to be visible), it is particularly important to maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet from others as much as possible.

Laws in certain settings may require masks

Certain settings may have specific federal, state, and/or local legal requirements that require facemasks.

- CDC requires facemasks on buses, trains, trolleys, subways, ride-shares, maritime transportation, air travel, and other public transportation.

- Passengers and drivers must wear a mask on school buses, including on buses operated by public and private school systems.
- Health care settings – including long-term care – may be required by federal, state, and/or local regulatory authorities to require facemasks in certain situations.
- Local authorities (such as a city, town, or county) are permitted to establish mask requirements and those requirements must be followed.
- Businesses and entities can also set their own mask rules, and workers and customers may be legally required to follow those requirements.

Note that this is not an exhaustive list of federal, state, or local requirements. Be sure you understand your region and industry's legal requirements. Businesses that are uncertain about applicable legal requirements should seek legal advice.

Reasonable accommodations

In certain circumstances, the use of masks may not be reasonable, and safe alternative accommodations should be considered.

Businesses and other entities that choose to require masks should also consider disability exemptions. Businesses and other entities should be aware that:

- People who have certain disabilities, behavioral needs, or other health, mental health, or developmental conditions may have difficulty wearing a mask or other face covering safely.
- People who have trouble breathing, are unconscious, or are unable to remove a mask without help should not wear a mask.
- Children under age 2 should not wear a mask.
- Certain situations (e.g., swimming or other activities that will soak or submerge a face covering in water) may make masks unsafe.

Minnesotans with disabilities have the right to live free from discrimination. The Minnesota Human Rights Act prohibits disability discrimination in public places, employment, schools, and other areas.

How masks work

- The virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to be mostly spread by respiratory droplets and fine particles released when people breath, talk, cough, or sneeze.
- Wearing a well-fitted mask stops these droplets from spreading to others. This is extra important because around 40-50% of people with COVID-19 do not have symptoms but can still spread the virus.
- Wearing a mask does not mean people who are sick should be in public. Stay home if you are sick unless you need to seek medical care.
- Wearing a mask and following other public health recommendations (like staying 6 feet from others and washing your hands often) can provide extra layers of protection against getting and spreading COVID-19.

Types of masks

- MDH recommends wearing a high-quality mask to help limit COVID-19, including variants like Omicron. Examples of high-quality masks include N95 or KN95 masks, which are very good at blocking droplets.
- If you do not have this type of mask, wear a mask with two or more layers of tightly woven fabric. You can also layer a disposable mask under a cloth mask to increase effectiveness. The cloth mask should press the edges of the disposable mask snugly against your face.
- Do not wear face coverings made of thinner, loosely woven, or single-layer fabric such as certain types of masks, scarves, neck gaiters, or bandannas. They are not as effective for blocking droplets that come out when speaking, coughing, or sneezing. If you wear a scarf or neck gaiter for warmth, also wear a mask underneath it.
- Any masks that incorporate 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.

Look for masks with nose wires. They can improve fit and help reduce gaps or holes.

How to wear a mask

- Wash your hands before putting on your mask and after taking it off.
- A mask must cover the nose and mouth completely and fit snugly against your face without gaps. The mask should not be overly tight or restrictive and should feel comfortable to wear.
- For children 2 years and older, find a mask that is made for children to help ensure proper fit. Children under age 2 should NOT wear a mask.
- If you wear glasses, find a mask that fits closely over your nose or one that has a nose wire to limit fogging.
- Do **NOT** touch the mask when wearing it. If you often have to touch or adjust your mask, it does not fit you properly and you may need to find a different mask or make adjustments.
- Wash your mask after each time you wear it.