



NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Frequently Asked Questions on Cloth Face Coverings May 5, 2020

Q. Why do I need to wear a cloth face covering?

A. Following CDC guidance, Executive Order 138 recommends that people wear a cloth face covering when they leave their house and may be near (less than six (6) feet from) other people who are not family or household members. Covering your face is about helping others. By covering your face when you go out for essential reasons, you are being a good neighbor and community member. There is growing evidence that the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) can spread between people in close contact – through actions like coughing, sneezing and talking- even when they are not showing symptoms. Wearing a face covering is another step that may help reduce the spread, especially for those who are sick but may not know it.

Face coverings are not a replacement for other evidence-based measures such as physical distancing, frequent hand washing practices, and remaining at home whenever possible.

Q. When should I wear a cloth face covering?

A. Cloth face coverings should be worn when you cannot maintain at least six (6) feet distancing from other people, with the exception of family or household members. This includes indoor community, public and business settings, such as shopping at the grocery store or picking up prescriptions at the pharmacy. Face coverings should also be worn outdoors when you cannot maintain at least six (6) feet distancing from other people, with the exception of family or household members. Cloth face coverings are not needed for situations where you will not be near someone outside your household – such as driving in your car or walking outdoors in areas where you can maintain at least six (6) feet distancing from other people.

Q. Do I still need to stay at least six (6) feet away from people if I am wearing a cloth face covering?

A. Yes. Wearing cloth face coverings is an additional public health measure to reduce the spread of COVID-19. It is still recommended that you stay at least six (6) feet way from other people and frequently wash your hands or use hand sanitizer. A cloth face covering is not intended to protect the wearer, but it may prevent the spread of virus from the wearer to others. This is especially important if someone is infected but does not have symptoms.

Q. Do I need to wear a face covering while exercising outdoors?

A. No. If you are able to safely maintain at least six (6) feet distance from others, you do not need to wear a face covering when exercising outdoors.

Q. Should children wear cloth face coverings?

A. Consider cloth face coverings for children over the age of 2 if it is determined they can reliably wear, remove, and handle cloth face coverings following CDC guidance throughout the day. Cloth face coverings should NOT be put on babies and children under the age of 2 because of danger of suffocation.

Q. What kind of face covering should I use?

A. The general public should wear cloth face coverings that cover the nose and mouth. Procedural and N95 respirators are critical supplies and should be reserved for healthcare workers or other medical first responders, as recommended by CDC guidance. Ski masks do not provide appropriate coverage.

Q. Where can I get a cloth face covering?

A. While cloth face coverings are being sold by a range of retailers and available to purchase online, you can also make them at home from regular household items. CDC has released [resources](#) on how to make a face covering from items like bandanas and t-shirts. A [video](#) showing the steps is also available

Q. Who should not wear cloth face coverings?

A. Cloth face coverings should not be placed on children younger than two (2) years of age, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise needs assistance to remove the face covering.

Q. How do I take care of my cloth face covering?

A. It is a good idea to wash your cloth face covering frequently, ideally after each use, or at least daily. Have a bag or bin to keep cloth face coverings in 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

Q. How do I safely adjust or remove a used cloth face covering?

A. Be careful not to touch your eyes, nose, and mouth when removing or adjusting a face covering and wash hands immediately after removing or adjusting.

Q. What if I am worried about being profiled or being subjected to bias if I wear a cloth face covering?

A. While it is encouraged that you wear a face covering, it is not required, and individuals must determine themselves whether they are comfortable and feel safe wearing one in public. Some populations may experience increased anxiety and fear of bias and being profiled wearing face coverings in public spaces, but everyone should adhere to this guidance without fear of profiling or bias. If someone is the target of ethnic or racial intimidation as the result of adhering to the face covering provision or as a result of the pandemic, they are encouraged to report the matter to law enforcement or other government entity.

Q. What if I am a person with, or I support someone with a disability and cannot or simply will not wear a face covering?

A. It may be scary for individuals to have cloth placed over their face if they do not understand why or if they have trouble with breathing. Some individuals may have sensitivity to having something placed over their face. Providing clear education about the reasons to wear a face covering, giving encouragement, and modeling the use of a face covering are good rules of thumb when helping

someone. It may also be helpful to practice wearing a face covering for short time periods or limiting the amount of time it is worn. If an individual is unable to wear a cloth face covering or will not tolerate using a cloth face covering, it may be necessary to use a scarf or other wrap. A person should not be forced to use a cloth face covering, but, instead, other steps should be taken to help the individual avoid unnecessary exposure.

Q. What if I am a person with hearing loss and am concerned about not being able to read lips?

A. Deaf and Hard of Hearing people often use lipreading to help understand what those around them are saying. Without being able to lipread, other communication techniques need to be used to help with communication. Some solutions to improve communication include: find a cloth face covering that has a clear plastic area that allows the lips to be visible (there are a number of options out there), increase your distance, write notes back and forth, write on a white board to communicate, use a free speech to text app on your mobile device and allow the person to read what you speak, gesture and if needed step several additional feet back from the person and remove your face cloth face covering just long enough to communicate.

Q. Can you breathe in carbon dioxide while wearing a face mask?

A. There is a potential risk of re-breathing carbon dioxide with face masks, but the risk is higher with a tight fitting N95 respirator with a dead space between the users mouth and nose. The risk of rebreathing carbon dioxide is likely less with cloth face coverings as they are composed of fabric which is breathable and thus should not trap carbon dioxide. In addition, cloth face coverings typically do not have dead space between mouth and nose.