

Pennsylvania Department of Health Masking Order Update

Effective Nov. 17, 2020

As of Nov. 17, the Pennsylvania Department of Health has updated its masking order to now include additional guidance for mandatory masking of all people over the age of 2.

Read the Secretary's full order [here](#); Read the Secretary's FAQ [here](#).

Individuals who cannot wear a mask due to a medical condition (including children under the age of 2 years per CDC guidance) may enter the premises and are not required to provide documentation of such medical condition; however, if you have a chronic condition that would prohibit you from wearing a mask, for your health and safety, you may want to reconsider your attendance at the Y.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why did the Secretary re-issue this Order?

The Secretary re-issued this Order to continue to protect all people in the Commonwealth from the spread of COVID-19.

What type of mask complies with this Order?

The Order requires individuals to wear a "face covering." "Face covering" means **covering of the nose and mouth with material that is secured to the head with ties, straps, or loops over the ears or is wrapped around the lower face.** A "face covering" can be made of a variety of synthetic or natural fabrics, including cotton, silk or linen. A "face covering" may be factory-made, [sewn by hand, or be improvised from household items](#)[Opens In A New Window](#), including, but not limited to, scarfs, bandanas, t-shirts, sweatshirts, or towels.

While procedural and surgical masks intended for health care providers and first responders, such as N95 respirators, meet those requirements, these specialized masks should be reserved for appropriate occupational and health care settings.

Does a disposable face shield suffice in lieu of a mask?

Wearing a cloth face covering is best. A disposable face shield is considered an alternative to a face covering and may be worn when wearing a face covering is otherwise not possible.

What happens if I don't wear a mask?

The wearing of a face covering, such as a mask, helps us as a society to limit the spread of COVID-19 and successfully combat this pandemic; therefore, it is in everyone's best interest that all Pennsylvanians comply with this Order.

As this is a **legal Order under the Disease Prevention and Control Law, law enforcement officers are authorized to issue warnings or citations to anyone who does not comply with the Order.** The Department of Health can also issue warnings and citations to businesses, persons, facilities, and organizations that do not comply.

Should I report someone not wearing a mask? If so, how do I report them?

Individuals should be cautious about reporting individuals who are not wearing a face covering, such as a mask, as individuals may fall under one of the exemptions (including having a medical condition that would excuse them from having to wear a face covering). However, if there is a legitimate concern about a situation of non-compliance with the Order, local law enforcement agencies can be contacted through their non-emergency phone numbers to investigate issues of compliance. **Individuals should not confront anyone who is not wearing a face covering, take enforcement matters into their own hands, or put themselves in a dangerous situation.**

If I'm inside a public place and can maintain physical distancing, do I need to wear a mask?

Yes. When indoors, individuals must wear a face covering, irrespective of physical distance. If a person is working alone and does not expect to have any interaction with another person, they may remove their face covering.

What does "working alone" mean?

"Working alone" means when a person is separated from interaction with other people with little or no expectation of in-person interruption. Examples include:

- A lone worker inside the enclosed cab of a crane or construction equipment.
- A lone worker inside an office with four walls and a door.
- A lone worker inside a cubicle with 3 walls and a door or entryway, where walls are high enough to block the breathing zone of all people walking by, and the worker's activity will not require anyone to come inside that person's workspace.
- A person who is alone in an agricultural field or other open area with no expected contact with others.

Do I have to wear a mask both inside and outside?

The Order requires individuals to wear a face covering when indoors, irrespective of physical distance. When outdoors, one must wear a face covering when with others who are not members of the person's household and unable to maintain sustained physical distance. Sustained physical distance means the practice of staying at least six feet away from others to avoid becoming a [close contact](#)[Opens In A New Window](#). On October 21, 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated its definition of close contact to "someone who was within six feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period." The guidance goes on to note that there are additional factors to consider when defining "close contact." DOH recommends using 15 consecutive minutes of exposure at a distance of six feet or less as an

operational definition for "close contact." However, there are circumstances when someone should be considered a close contact of a case after being within six feet for fewer than 15 consecutive minutes. Additional factors that should be considered when assessing close contacts include but are not limited to close proximity to an infected person, infected person exhibiting symptoms, and environmental conditions like crowds or inadequate ventilation.

When does my child have to wear a mask?

Children two years old and older are required to wear a face covering as required by the Order, unless they qualify for one of the exceptions in Section 3 of the Order. If a child is outdoors and able to consistently maintain a social distance of at least six feet from individuals who are not a part of their household, they do not need to wear a face covering.

If a parent, guardian, or responsible person is unable to place a face covering safely on the child's face, they should not do so. If a child two years old or older is unable to remove a face covering without assistance, the child is not required to wear one.

Do staff and children in childcare facilities need to wear face coverings?

All staff and children two years old and older must wear face coverings during childcare operations.

Any child who cannot wear a face covering due to a medical condition, including those with respiratory issues that impede breathing, a mental health condition, or disability, and children who would be unable to remove a face covering without assistance, are not required to wear face coverings.

Individuals who are communicating or seeking to communicate with someone who is hearing impaired or who has another disability, where the ability to see the mouth is essential to communication, also are not required to wear a face covering. Alternative face coverings, such as plastic face shields, may also accommodate such disabilities.

Does the Order apply to children and adults while in schools?

Yes, the Order applies to all students, staff and visitors two years old and older while in school entities, including public K-12 schools, brick and mortar and cyber charter schools, private and parochial schools, career and technical centers (CTCs), intermediate units (IUs); educational programming for students in non-educational placements such as residential settings (boarding schools), residential facilities, detention centers, and hospital settings; PA Pre-K Counts, Head Start Programs and Preschool Early Intervention programs; Private Academic Nursery Schools and locally funded prekindergarten activities; and post-secondary institutions.

For the safety of students, staff and families and to avoid community spread of COVID-19, students and staff are considered to be members of the public who are congregating in indoor locations. As such, they are required to adhere to the Order.

Does the updated Order apply to all children?

The updated order applies to all children two years old and older.

Under what circumstances are students permitted to remove their face coverings?

School entities may allow students to remove face coverings when students are:

- Eating or drinking when spaced at least six feet apart; or
- When wearing a face covering creates an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task; or
- At least six feet apart during "face-covering breaks" to last no longer than 10 minutes.

Do students with disabilities need to wear face coverings?

Children two years old and older are required to wear a face covering unless they have a medical or mental health condition or disability, documented in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act or the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), that precludes the wearing of a face covering in school. Accommodations for such students should be made in partnership with the student's health care provider, school nurse, and Individual Education Plan (IEP)/Section 504 team.

Does the Order require individuals to wear masks when participating in indoor physical activity?

Yes, a person must wear a face covering when participating in indoor physical activity where another person or persons who are not members of the individual's household are present in the same space, irrespective of physical distance. Face coverings need not be worn if the person meets one of the exceptions in Section 3 of the Order.

- **Y members are required to wear masks at all times** while at the Y. Exclusions include while actually taking a shower (must be worn in the locker room EXCEPT when showering), swimming and in the sauna. Note that masks must be worn on the pool deck until you've reached your lane and/or class.

Does the Order apply to athletes and sports activities?

Yes. Everyone who participates in sport activities including coaches, athletes (including cheerleaders), and spectators must wear a face covering, such as a mask, unless they fall under an exception in Section 3 of the Order.

Indoors: Coaches, athletes (including cheerleaders), and spectators must wear face coverings, when indoors and where another person or persons who are not members of the individual's household are present in the same space, irrespective of physical distance. This includes while actively engaged in workouts, competition, and on the sidelines, etc.

Outdoors: Coaches, athletes (including cheerleaders), and spectators must wear face coverings if they cannot maintain sustained physical distance from persons outside of their household. This includes while actively engaged in workouts, competition,

and on the sidelines, in the dugout, etc. If sustained six-foot distancing can be maintained, face coverings may be removed when outdoors.

Can a business deny entry to a customer who is not wearing a face covering?

Yes, if a customer is not wearing a face covering a business should deny entry; however, that business must offer a reasonable accommodation for the customer to purchase goods. State and Federal law, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), may also create obligations for businesses or employers. Businesses should talk to their legal representatives for specific advice.

Can a business deny entry to an employee who is not wearing a face covering?

All employees must wear a face covering, such as a mask in the workplace unless they qualify for an exception in Section 3 of the Order. The administration does not dictate to employers how they should manage their workforce; however, employers should follow all applicable laws including the ADA and consult with their legal representatives for legal advice.