



Guidance on the Use of Masks by the General Public

SARS-CoV-2 is a novel coronavirus that has emerged and caused coronavirus disease (abbreviated as COVID-19). Public health experts continue to learn about COVID-19, but based on current data and similar coronaviruses, the virus is believed to be spread between close contacts via respiratory droplets or contact with contaminated surfaces. While staying home, social distancing, and strict hand hygiene are still preferred methods for preventing further spread of COVID-19, facemasks are one more tool that may be used by the general public and essential workers to protect each other from respiratory droplets produced when we cough, sneeze, or talk.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) now recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies), especially in areas of significant community-based transmission. CDC also advises the use of simple cloth face coverings to slow the spread of the virus and help people who may have the virus and do not know it from transmitting it to others.

The most effective measures for preventing further spread of COVID-19 remain staying home when you are sick, maintain physical separation between other people while out in public (at least 6 feet), and frequently washing your hands with either soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.

When to Wear a Mask

All Illinoisans should wear a mask or face covering when they must leave their home or report to work for essential operations and they either cannot or it is impractical to maintain 6 feet of physical distance between themselves and others. Examples include:

- Shopping at essential businesses, like grocery stores or pharmacies,
- Picking up food from the drive thru or curbside pickup,
- While visiting your health care provider,
- Traveling on public transportation,
- Interacting with customers, clients, or coworkers at essential businesses,
- Performing essential services for state and local government agencies, such as laboratory testing, where close interactions with other people are unavoidable, and
- When feeling sick, coughing, or sneezing.

Those who are staying home and have no close contacts that are infected with COVID-19 don't need a mask while at home. Provided you do so alone or with close, household contacts, other situations that don't require a mask or face covering include running or walking in your neighborhood, mowing the lawn, performing spring yard cleanup, gardening, driveway car washing, and other outdoor activities on

your own property. Nevertheless we must be intentional about avoiding crowds and social distancing so we can enjoy physical connections later.

By following this guidance when you must leave your home, you will reduce your fellow citizen's exposure to respiratory droplets and infectious particles, and they yours. This will protect all of us.

Best Practices for Homemade Masks or Face Coverings

Best practices for making and wearing homemade masks include:

- Using materials available at home or buying materials online to avoid exposure in public places.
- Purchasing masks made by small businesses, saving medical masks for health care workers and potentially helping the local economy.
- Making masks from materials that will hold up to daily washing and drying. Wash and dry newly sewn masks before using them for the first time.
- Having more than one mask per person so they can be laundered daily. This will also be helpful if your mask becomes wet, damaged, or no longer fits and you need to replace it.
- Washing your hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water before putting on a mask, immediately after removing it, or if you touch the mask while using it.
- The mask should fit snugly around your mouth and nose. A metal wire sewn or built into the mask will help it conform to the bridge of your nose.
- Avoiding touching the mask while using it. If you do wash your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub.
- There are relatively few studies of the effectiveness of masks made from homemade materials. Whether you use cotton fabrics, paper-based shop towels, or other materials, try to strike a balance between the materials you already have at home, how easy it will be to breathe while wearing the mask for extended periods away from home, and whether or not you would prefer to craft a new mask every day (paper) or wash and reuse your mask(s).
- Replacing your mask when wet, damaged or it no longer fits your face. Masks should not be worn damp or when wet from spit or mucus.
- Try to avoid touching the outer surface of the mask when removing it. Remove the mask by untying it or unfastening the ear loops. Place it in a bag or bin away from small children or pets until it can be laundered.

This does not replace but enhances other IDPH guidance concerning social distancing and universal masking in congregate living facilities.

How do I care for my mask?

It's a good idea to wash your mask or face covering at least daily. Place your used masks in a bag or bin away from small children or pets until they can be laundered with detergent and dried on a hot cycle. If you need to remove and reuse your mask before washing, consider putting it in a plastic or paper bag (not your backpack or purse) and be mindful not to put the mask where others can touch it or where the mask will contaminate other, shared surfaces. Wash your wash your hands immediately after putting it back on and avoid touching your face.

Paper-based masks, like those crafted from shop towels, should be discarded after each use.

How do can I make my own mask or face covering?

There are a number of online resources, including the following, with instructions for making homemade masks and face coverings from cloth fabric or paper. You may even be able to use a 3D Printer with open source designs if you have one at home.

CDC DIY Cloth Face Coverings (April 4) – <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>

CDC Recommendations for Cloth Face Covers – <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>

U.S. Surgeon General How to Make Your Own Face Covering (YouTube) – <https://youtu.be/tPx1yqvJgf4>
CDC Cloth Face Covers FAQ – <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-faq.html>

Pennsylvania Department of Public Health Guidance on Homemade Masks during COVID-19 – <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/Documents/Diseases%20and%20Conditions/Homemade%20Mask%20Guidance.pdf>

California Department of Public Health – <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Face-Coverings-Guidance.aspx>

Minnesota Department of Health Interim Guidance on Alternative Facemasks – <http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/masksalt.pdf>

New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Face Coverings FAQ – <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/imm/covid-19-face-covering-faq.pdf>

National Institutes of Health 3D Print Exchange – <https://3dprint.nih.gov/collections/covid-19-response>

JOANNE Fabric Stores – <https://www.joann.com/make-to-give-response/>

Easy No-Sew Shop Towel Mask (YouTube) – <https://youtu.be/mai-UqdNRi8>

Coronavirus Tips: How to make a mask without sewing (YouTube) – <https://youtu.be/t7oE65D4jGkCoron>

This guidance was adapted from universal masking guidance available from the Pennsylvania Department of Public Health, California Department of Public Health, and New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.