



Stay Home Stay Safe

Frequently Asked Questions: Cloth Face Coverings

This document provides public health information on how members of the general public can safely use cloth face coverings when they need to leave their home for a short period of time to obtain essential goods or services. Members of the general public should use a clean face covering anytime they will be in contact with other people who are not household members in public or private spaces. It is important to note that face coverings are not a substitute for always practicing physical distancing and frequent handwashing.

What is a cloth face covering?

A cloth face covering is a material that covers the nose and mouth. It can be secured to the head with ties or straps or simply wrapped around the lower face. It can be made of a variety of materials, such as cotton, silk, or linen. A cloth face covering may be factory-made or sewn by hand or can be improvised from household items such as scarfs, T-shirts, sweatshirts, or towels.

What can I use to cover my face?

Acceptable, reusable face covering options for the general public include:

- Homemade face covering
- Bandana
- Scarf
- Tightly woven fabric, such as cotton t-shirts and some types of towels

Why wear a face cover?

Recent information has indicated that covering your nose and mouth can slow the spread of COVID-19 because:

- Individuals can be contagious before the onset of symptoms. You may be contagious and do not know it. If you have covered your nose and mouth, it can limit the spread of COVID-19.
- We touch our face less when our face is covered. Touching your face after touching something contaminated with COVID-19 increases your chances of getting sick with COVID-19.



When should I wear a cloth face covering?

You are asked to wear a cloth face covering over your nose and mouth when you must be in public to visit an essential business, such as shopping at the grocery store. Wearing a cloth face covering does not eliminate the need to physically distance yourself from others and to wash your hands frequently.

How well do cloth face coverings work to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

There is limited evidence to suggest that the use of cloth face coverings by the public during a pandemic could help reduce disease transmission. Their primary role is to reduce the release of infectious particles into the air when someone speaks, coughs, or sneezes, including someone who has COVID-19 but feels well. Cloth face coverings are not a substitute for physical distancing and washing hands and staying home when ill, but they may be helpful when combined with these primary interventions. If you plan to use a face covering it is important to keep your nose and mouth covered. Lowering the covering from your nose and mouth while talking defeats the purpose of wearing the face covering since you can spread virus while you talk.

How should I care for a cloth face covering?

It's a good idea to wash your cloth face covering frequently, ideally after each use, or at least daily. Have a bag or bin to store cloth face coverings 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