



STATE OF WASHINGTON

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

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**ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH**

**20-03**

**Face Coverings - Statewide**

**WHEREAS**, Washington State Governor Jay Inslee has issued Proclamation 20-05, subsequently amended and extended, proclaiming a statewide State of Emergency due to an outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) in the United States and community spread of COVID-19 in Washington State; and

**WHEREAS**, COVID-19 spreads mainly from person to person through respiratory droplets when infected people, many of whom do not exhibit COVID-19 symptoms, cough, sneeze, or talk, and evidence suggests that wearing a cloth face covering reduces an infected person's chance of spreading the infection to others and may protect uninfected persons from larger droplets from infected people around them; and

**WHEREAS**, the Washington State Department of Health, the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the World Health Organization recommend that, in addition to their recommendations to maintain six feet of physical distance from non-household members and wash hands frequently with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer, people wear cloth face coverings when they are in public settings where they cannot reliably maintain six feet of distance from others at all times, given the substantial increase in the numbers of cases of COVID-19 infection, these precautions must be mandatory; and

**WHEREAS**, although many Washingtonians already regularly wear face coverings when in public, requiring all Washingtonians to wear cloth face coverings in public will help control and prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Washington State; and

**WHEREAS**, the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic and its progression in Washington State continue to constitute an emergency threatening the safety of the public health, demanding action by the Secretary of Health, and only a small number of Washington's local health officers have issued orders requiring the general public in their jurisdictions to wear cloth face coverings in public;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, I, John Wiesman, Washington State Secretary of Health, as a result of the above-noted situation, and under RCW 43.70.130, RCW 70.05.070, WAC 246-100-036, and any other applicable authority, do hereby order the following:

**Every person in Washington State must wear a face covering that covers their nose and mouth when in any indoor or outdoor public setting, including, but not limited to:**

- Inside any building, including, but not limited to, any business, that is open to the public;

- In healthcare settings, including, but not limited to, a hospital, pharmacy, medical clinic, laboratory, physician's or dentist's office, veterinary clinic, or blood bank;
- While in line waiting for or riding on public transportation or paratransit, or while riding in a taxi, private car service, ride-sharing vehicle, or other for hire vehicle; and
- In outdoor public areas, including but not limited to public parks, trails, streets, sidewalks, lines for entry, exit, or service, and recreation areas, when a distance of at least six feet cannot be maintained from any non-household member.

**Individuals may remove their face coverings when in public settings under the following circumstances:**

- While seated at a restaurant or other establishment that offers food or beverage service, while they are eating or drinking, provided that they are able to maintain a distance of at least six feet from guests seated at other tables;
- While engaged in indoor or outdoor exercise activities, such as walking, hiking, bicycling, or running, provided that a distance of at least six feet is maintained from non-household members, except that face covering requirements for individuals engaged in team sports activities are governed by the requirements issued by the Governor;
- While in an outdoor public area, provided that a distance of at least six feet is maintained from non-household members;
- When any party to a communication is deaf or hard of hearing and not wearing a face covering is essential to communication;
- While obtaining a service that requires temporary removal of the face covering;
- While sleeping;
- When necessary to confirm the individual's identity; and
- When federal or state law prohibits wearing a face covering or requires the removal of a face covering.

**The following individuals are exempt from the requirement to wear a face covering:**

- Children younger than five years old; and
  - Children who are younger than two years old should never wear face coverings due to the risk of suffocation.
  - Children who are two, three, or four years old, with the assistance and close supervision of an adult, are strongly recommended to wear a face covering at all times in settings, like grocery stores or pharmacies, where it is likely that a distance of at least six feet cannot be maintained from non-household members and vulnerable people must go.
- Persons with a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that prevents wearing a face covering. This includes, but is not limited to, persons with a medical condition for whom wearing a face covering could obstruct breathing or who are unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without assistance.

For purposes of this order, a face covering means a cloth face covering that covers the nose and mouth. It can be:

- A sewn mask secured with ties or straps around the head or behind the ears;
- Multiple layers of fabric tied around the head;
- Made from a variety of materials, such as fleece, cotton, or linen; or
- Factory-made or made from household items.

A face covering also includes a mask or covering that provides a higher level of protection than a cloth face covering, such as an N95 mask, though people are generally encouraged to use cloth face coverings to preserve access to these higher grade face coverings for health care and other settings where they are most needed.

Children in childcare facilities and K-12 public and private schools may use face shields as an alternative to a cloth face covering if authorized pursuant to an order of the Governor.

This order does not apply to persons who are incarcerated. Correctional facilities, as part of their Safe Start plans, will have specific guidance on the wearing of face coverings or masks for both incarcerated individuals and staff.

Other agencies and officials have taken or may take action to require the wearing of face coverings in certain settings and jurisdictions and for certain purposes. Every person in Washington State must wear a face covering whenever legally required to do so by this order or by the action of any other agency or official. This order and the actions of other agencies and officials must be followed to the extent they are not in conflict.


If this order and the action of any other agency or official are in conflict, the more protective requirement must be followed, unless prohibited by a federal or state statute or rule. For example, this order allows individuals to remove their face coverings in outdoor public settings if they are able to maintain a distance of six feet from non-household members. If a local health officer issues an order requiring people to wear a face covering in outdoor public settings at all times, without an exception for physical distancing, then the local health officer's order must be followed because it is more protective than this order.

Any face covering requirement imposed pursuant to an order of the Governor must be followed.

This order shall take effect on June 26, 2020, and remain in effect until rescinded or superseded by a subsequent order of the Secretary of Health or until the Governor issues a proclamation declaring the termination of the State of Emergency declared by Proclamation 20-05, as amended and extended by subsequent amendatory proclamations, whichever is earlier.

Members of the public are required by law to comply with this order, and violators may be subject to criminal penalties pursuant to RCW 43.70.130(7), RCW 70.05.120(4), and WAC 246-100-070(3).

Signed this 24th day of June, 2020.

  
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John Wiesman, DrPH, MPH  
Secretary of Health

