
State of Wisconsin



Why are face coverings required?

Cloth face coverings (or face masks) are recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS), and healthcare professionals as an easy way to help prevent respiratory droplets from traveling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the cloth face covering coughs, sneezes, talks, or raises their voice.

Rates of COVID-19 have significantly increased in Wisconsin as more people return to work and have more interactions in public. Wearing face coverings is the simplest way to slow and prevent the spread of COVID-19 virus without requiring people stay in their homes.

When do I need to wear a face covering?

You need to wear a face covering whenever you are indoors or in an enclosed space, other than a private residence, and other people are present in the same room or space. For example, you must wear a face covering while you are shopping in a store or using a taxi.

When do I *not* need to wear a face covering?

You do not need to wear a face covering if:

- you are at a private residence;
- you are outside; or
- you are indoors and no one else is present.

You can also remove your face covering in the following situations:

- When you are eating or drinking.
- When you are communicating with someone who is deaf or hard of hearing and you cannot communicate while wearing a mask.
- While sleeping (e.g., firefighters sleeping at a fire station).
- While swimming or being on duty as a lifeguard.
- When you are giving a religious, political, media, educational, artistic, cultural, musical, or theatrical presentation for an audience, so long as you have at least 6 feet between you and other individuals.
- When you are working if wearing a face covering poses a safety risk, as determined by government safety guidelines or regulations.
- When you need to temporarily remove your face covering to confirm your identify, such as entering a bank, credit union, or other financial institution or when having to show that you match your identification card when buying alcohol.
- When engaging in activities where federal or state law or regulations prohibit wearing a face covering.

Do I need to wear a face covering indoors, even if I can physically distance from other people at all times?

Yes, you need to wear a face covering indoors unless you are at a private residence or you're the only person in the room.

Do I need to wear a face covering when I exercise?

It depends on where you are exercising. You do not need to wear a face covering if you are exercising in a private residence or outdoors. For example, you do not need to wear a mask if you are riding your bike on a trail. But you do need to wear a face covering if you are exercising indoors or in an enclosed space and other people are present, such as a gym, a cycling studio, or hotel workout room.

Do I need to wear a face covering when eating, drinking, or sleeping in indoor places other than my home?

No. But you must put your face covering on again when you are done with these activities. For example, while you're waiting for your table or waiting for a server to come take your order, keep your mask on. This includes outdoor restaurant and bar areas.

I have a medical condition that prevents me from wearing a face covering. Do I need documentation to prove that I don't need to wear a face covering in public?

No. You are not required to carry documentation to prove that you do not need to wear a face covering in public.

Does this order apply to private residences that are also used for business activity, such as a massage therapist who operates out of their home?

No, the order does not apply to private residences.

Where can I get a face covering?

You can make a face covering. The CDC provides both [sew and no-sew instructions](#).

You can buy a face covering from a store, including online stores.

Also, many communities have programs where individuals can get a face covering for free. Check your neighborhood groups and community organizations for such programs.

Can I wear a face shield instead of a face covering?

No. A face shield does not provide the same protections as a face covering. You are free to wear a face shield *in addition* to a face covering. But a face shield cannot be used in place of a face covering that would otherwise be required by this order.

There may be situations where a face shield can be used instead of a face covering if you are engaging in work where wearing a face covering would create a risk to you, as determined by government safety guidelines (for example, OSHA guidelines may permit certain food manufacturing facility workers to wear a face shield instead of a face covering), or if you are engaging in activities where federal or state law or regulations prohibit wearing a face covering.

Are face coverings required inside businesses and office spaces?

Yes, unless an exception applies.

Do I need to wear a face covering when in my car, in a ride-share service, or on public transportation?

The only time you need to wear a face covering in your own car is if you're traveling with people from another household. You have to wear a mask if you're using a ride-share or on public transportation.

Where can I get more information on how to wear a face covering, safe practices for putting it on and taking it off, and when to wash face coverings?

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) has information on its website on wearing, cleaning, and making face coverings (<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/protect.htm>). Additional information can be found on the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html>).

Will businesses be required to provide face coverings for their employees or customers?

No. But many businesses may decide to offer face coverings to employees or customers and are encouraged to do so.

How will the face covering order be enforced?

The hope is that all Wisconsinites will step up, do the right thing, and voluntarily comply. For intentional violations of the face covering order, enforcement will depend on the factual setting and the local government officers. Intentional violations are enforceable through a civil fine up to \$200. [Wis. Stat. § 323.25](#). Such a violation may be reported to a local public health official for follow-up or to a district attorney, who has statutory authority under [Wis. Stat. § 978.05\(2\)](#) to prosecute state forfeiture actions.

What do I do if I see someone not wearing a mask, even though they should be?

Nothing. Some people have conditions or circumstances that would make wearing a cloth face covering difficult or dangerous. Just wear your mask and stay six feet away.

What do I do if someone is harassing me for wearing a mask?

No one should have to endure harassment, for any reason. Contact your local law enforcement.

What if the town or city I live in already has a face covering or mask order?

The Governor's order sets a minimum bar. If your local government has stricter requirements, those requirements must be followed.