



COVID-19 Face Coverings: Frequently Asked Questions

As the City continues to reopen and more people return to work outside the home, it's important to protect each other. New Yorkers should wear a face covering whenever they are with other people in an indoor setting that is not their home, even if 6 feet of distance can be maintained.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a face covering?

A face covering is any well-secured paper or cloth (like a bandana or scarf) that covers your nose and mouth. A face covering with an exhalation valve should not be used as it allows unfiltered exhaled air to escape to others.

Who must wear a face covering?

A New York State mandate requires everyone to wear a face covering when outside their home if unable to maintain at least 6 feet of distance from others. Examples include walking on a busy street, going to pharmacies and grocery stores, or going to the doctor. You must wear a face covering **at all times** when riding public transportation, such as the subway, ferry, bus, taxis, and car services. It is strongly recommended that you wear a face covering as much as possible when in a shared indoor space outside your home, such as places of worship and offices, even if you are able to maintain 6 feet of distance from others.

If you live in a facility that has shared kitchens, bathrooms, or other common spaces, wear a face covering when you leave your apartment or room.

People who are sick should wear a face covering while at home, especially if they cannot maintain at least 6 feet of distance from others, and at all times whenever they leave home.

Do children need to wear a face covering?

Children over the age of 2 must wear a face covering. Small children are more likely to touch their face covering, so caretakers should wash children's hands or apply hand sanitizer often. Child care programs have special requirements – please check with your child's program.

I have a health problem that makes it hard for me to wear a face covering. Do I still need to wear a face covering?

If you have a health issue that makes you unable to tolerate a face covering, you do not need to wear one. This makes practicing physical distancing and hand hygiene even more essential.

Do I need to wear a face covering when I am exercising?

No, as long as you maintain at least 6 feet of distance from others.

When do workers need to wear a face covering?

Workers must wear a face covering at work, unless they are certain that they can maintain at least 6 feet of distance from all others (co-workers, customers, clients, and others). Employers must provide face coverings to employees for free, and employees must wear a face covering or have one with them at all times. Your employer may have additional requirements as to when a face covering, or other protection, is needed. Even if 6 feet of distance can be maintained, wearing a face covering as much as possible when working indoors and around other people is strongly recommended.

I had COVID-19 and am better now. Do I still need to wear a face covering?

Yes. The New York State requirement to wear a face covering applies even if you had COVID-19.

What type of face covering is better — paper or cloth?

Either a paper or cloth face covering is fine, as long as it covers your nose and mouth. Do not use a face covering with an exhalation valve. Please do not use N95 respirators, as these remain in short supply—it is essential that we save N95 respirators for our health care workers.

How often do I need to wash my face covering?

We recommend washing once a day by hand or machine using detergent. **The face covering should be fully dry before using.** People should have a few face coverings so they can rotate for washing.

For how long can I use a paper face covering?

You can continue to use a paper face covering until it becomes damaged, dirty or wet.

Are there precautions I should take with my face covering?

Using face coverings incorrectly can spread germs. For this reason, it is important to properly wear, store and dispose of face coverings by doing the following:

- Wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer every time you put on and take off your face covering. If you are unable to clean your hands, be very careful not to touch your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Do not put face coverings where others can touch them or where germs trapped in your face covering can touch other surfaces, such as counter tops or your kitchen table.
- Do not throw your face covering loose in a bag or backpack. Keep a plastic bag with you to store your face covering if you will be taking it off when outside your home.
- Dispose of single-use face coverings in the garbage. Do not throw them on the street.

Is it possible to make my own face covering?

Yes! A face covering can be a scarf, bandana or other cloth. See [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-make-cloth-face-covering.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-make-cloth-face-covering.html) and [facebook.com/nycmayorsoffice/videos/729510477585270](https://www.facebook.com/nycmayorsoffice/videos/729510477585270) for ideas on how to make a face covering.