



**COLORADO**  
Department of Public  
Health & Environment

## COVID-19

# Questions & answers about the statewide mandatory mask order

### ABOUT THE EXECUTIVE ORDER

#### What is the statewide mandatory mask order?

- Executive Order D 2020 138 requires people in Colorado all individuals over ten (10) years old must wear a face covering over their noses and mouths:
  - When entering or moving within any public indoor space.
  - While using or waiting to use public (buses, light-rail) or non-personal (taxis, car services, ride-shares) transportation services.
- People do **not** need to wear a mask when they are:
  - Hearing-impaired or otherwise disabled or who are communicating with someone who is hearing impaired or otherwise disabled and where the ability to see the mouth is essential to communication.
  - Seated at a food service establishment.
  - Exercising alone or with others from the individual's household, and a face covering would interfere with the activity.
  - Receiving a personal service where the temporary removal of the face-covering is necessary to perform the service.
  - Entering a business or receiving services and are asked to temporarily remove a face covering for identification purposes.
  - Are actively engaged in a public safety role such as law enforcement, firefighters, or emergency medical personnel.
  - Officiating at a religious service.
  - Giving a speech for broadcast or an audience.

#### When does this executive order go into effect?

- The mandatory statewide mask order goes into effect at midnight on July 16, 2020, and is in effect for 30 days. The executive order may be extended.

#### What is a public indoor space?

- For the mask order, "public indoor space" means a publicly or privately owned, managed or operated, enclosed indoor area that is accessible to the public, is a place of employment, or is an entity that provides services. Public indoor space does not mean a person's residence, including a room in a

motel or hotel or a residential room for students at an educational facility. Public indoor spaces include but are not limited to:

- Government buildings
- Nonprofits
- Transportation
- Houses of worship
- Private country clubs or social clubs
- Grocery stores
- Hair salons
- All offices, lobbies, elevators
- Malls, retail stores
- Indoor businesses, common areas
- Medical facilities, nursing homes
- Restaurants (if not seated)
- Libraries
- Museums
- Theaters
- Casinos
- Gyms, including areas around indoor pools but not while swimming in the pool
- If a business or entity provides services or goods both indoors and outdoors at a single location, a mask must be worn in the indoor portion of that business or entity
- All enclosed indoor areas, whether publicly or privately owned or managed, except an individual's residence

#### **Is the mask order a law?**

- Yes, executive orders and public health orders have the force of law. People who do not comply with the executive order may be subject to civil or criminal penalties.

#### **Why did the state wait until now to issue mandatory mask orders?**

- The governor and state public health officials know masks are one of the most effective tools we currently have to limit the spread of COVID-19, but orders are often best issued and enforced at the local level. While more than thirty-nine (39) Colorado cities and counties have mask orders, others do not. A statewide order helps eliminate confusion and makes mask requirements more consistent across the state.
- Many business owners asked for this statewide order because it eliminates inconsistency for patrons from different counties. The executive order requires businesses to refuse service to customers who are not wearing masks, which in turn will help slow the spread of the virus and ensure businesses can remain open with precautions during the pandemic.

#### **Why is age 10 the cutoff for the mask requirement?**

- Children 10 years and younger are not required to wear masks because the evidence so far has shown that children in this age group are much less likely to spread COVID-19 than older children and adults. It is also less likely that children of this age will wear a mask correctly.

#### **Who has to wear a mask?**

- The order applies to people in Colorado over 10 years old when they are in a public indoor space or when they are waiting for or using public transportation or ride-shares.

### **Who does not have to wear a mask?**

- People who are 10 years old and younger.
- People who cannot medically tolerate a face covering.
- Children ages 2 and under should NOT wear masks or cloth face coverings.

### **What does it mean to be unable to medically tolerate a face covering?**

- Essentially, this means a person who has trouble breathing or anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face-covering without assistance, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [Read more from the CDC](#) about other reasons face coverings may not be possible in every situation or for some people.

### **Do I have to wear a mask when I exercise indoors?**

- You do not have to wear a mask if you are exercising alone or with others from your own household. But, if you are exercising with a group of people in a public indoor space, then yes, you must wear a mask.

### **What if I'm swimming in an indoor pool?**

- You should take your mask off while swimming in the pool but you must put it back on while you are not swimming but in the pool area.

### **Do I have to wear a mask outdoors?**

- The executive order does not state that you must wear a mask outdoors unless you are waiting on public or non-personal transportation.
- However, it is best to wear a mask whenever you cannot keep a safe distance (at least 6 feet) from other people. We encourage you to wear a mask whenever you are in crowded spaces, either indoors or out.

### **Do I have to wear a mask at grocery or hardware stores?**

- Yes, you must wear a mask when entering any kind of store.

### **Do I have to wear a mask at a restaurant?**

- Yes, you must wear a mask when entering or exiting a restaurant. You may take the mask off when you are seated but must put it back on when you stand up to use the restroom or to leave.

### **Does this apply to houses of worship?**

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- Yes, this applies to any indoor setting open to members of the public. If there are certain religious spaces where members of the public are not allowed, such as spaces only accessible by clergy, then this does not apply to those limited settings. Individuals officiating a religious service are not required to wear masks but are encouraged to do so if feasible.

## **MASKS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS**

### **Can cities and counties opt out of the statewide mask order?**

- Counties that are certified for [Protect Our Neighbors](#) status may choose to be exempt from the statewide mask order.

### **Can counties or municipalities have more restrictive orders?**

- Yes, counties and municipalities can adopt stricter standards than the statewide order.

### **How do I know if my county or municipality has different orders?**

- Your [local public health agency](#) is a good source of information for orders within your county.

## **MASKS AND BUSINESSES**

### **What do businesses need to do to comply with the mask order?**

- The executive order states indoor businesses must refuse service to people who are not wearing masks.
- Businesses must post signs at entrances that instruct customers they must wear a mask when entering or moving around inside the business.

## **ENFORCEMENT**

### **What will happen if I refuse to wear a mask?**

- If you refuse to wear a mask as required in the executive order, you are violating a Colorado law and are subject to civil or criminal penalties.
- If you try to enter a store without a mask, you may be prosecuted for trespassing.

### **What happens if a business does not comply with the mask order?**

- A licensed business is at risk of losing its license.

### **What should business owners or employees do if patrons refuse to wear a mask?**

- Business owners should refuse service to individuals not wearing masks.

## **MASK BASICS**

## Is there a specific kind of mask people need to wear?

- You should wear something that covers your nose and mouth -- a cloth face covering or a disposable mask.
- The best mask for you is one you can wear comfortably and consistently. Any mask or face-covering that covers the nose and mouth will work.
- We continue to encourage you to use cloth face coverings to preserve medical mask supplies for health care and other essential workers.

## What is the difference between a mask and a face covering?

- Masks and face-coverings are interchangeable terms. Cloth masks or face coverings or disposable masks are acceptable as long as they cover the nose and mouth.
- People may wear surgical or other, more protective masks, but we encourage people to use cloth face coverings to preserve medical masks for health care and other essential workers.
- While at work, people should wear masks appropriate to the business in which they work.

## If we are social distancing, why do we still need to wear masks?

- It is becoming increasingly evident that masks are an inexpensive and easy way to limit disease spread. Together, masks and distancing offer a greater measure of protection. We strongly encourage all people in Colorado to practice the Big 3: Wear a mask. Wash your hands. Keep your distance.
- Face coverings are most essential when distancing is difficult. People who are unable to wear a face-covering should take other measures to reduce their risk, including distancing, frequent hand washing, and disinfecting surfaces.

## Where do I get a mask?

- You can make or buy your own. You can use a bandana or scarf. [ColoradoMaskProject.com](https://coloradomaskproject.com) has resources to help you make or buy a mask. The CDC has a [video about making your own mask](#).

## How should a mask fit?

- Face coverings should:
  - Fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face.
  - Be secured with ties or ear loops.
  - Include multiple layers of fabric.
  - Allow for breathing without restriction.
  - Be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape.
  - Cover your nose and mouth. Wearing them under your nose or chin is ineffective.

## How do I clean and sterilize my mask?

- Wash your cloth mask regularly with your regular laundry.

## How do I put on and take off the mask?

- Try not to touch your eyes, nose, or mouth when putting on and taking off your face covering. Hold the mask by the corners and avoid touching the front or back of it. Wash your hands before putting your mask on and right after you remove it.

## Where can I find out more?

- The [CDC](#) and [CDPHE](#) web pages are excellent resources.

## Can I get carbon dioxide poisoning or lowered oxygen levels from wearing a mask?

- According to the [Mayo Clinic Health System](#), “for many years, health care providers have worn masks for extended periods of time with no adverse health reactions ... there is no risk of hypoxia, which is lower oxygen levels, in healthy adults. Carbon dioxide will freely diffuse through your mask as you breathe.”

## What is the most recent science behind universal mask-wearing?

- Masks appear to help keep the person wearing the mask from spreading COVID-19 to others by reducing the amount and distance infectious particles can spread through [partial filtering](#) of said particles.
- New evidence also suggests masks may also partially protect the wearer, especially from severe infection, by potentially reducing [viral inoculation dose](#) and/or [face touching](#).
- Individuals are thought to be best protected when both they and most others in their community wear masks.
- In one instance, infected passengers on the Diamond Princess cruise ship, where widespread masking was not used during an outbreak, had only an [18% asymptomatic rate](#). Infected passengers on the Ernest Shackleton cruise ship, where widespread masking was implemented during an outbreak, had an [81% asymptomatic rate](#).
- In another instance, a seafood processing plant in Oregon that implemented universal mask-wearing had a [95% asymptomatic rate among 124 infected workers](#).
- In yet another instance, two infected hair salon employees in Missouri [did not transmit any apparent infections to any of their 139 clients](#) in the setting of mask use by them and nearly all of their clients.
- [Hamsters simulated to wear masks](#) had less severe COVID-19 infection than hamsters who were not simulated to wear masks when exposed to the virus.
- [A recent meta-analysis](#) suggests mask use may reduce infection rates by nearly 65%.
- A CDC editorial providing further evidence and advocating for universal mask-wearing is [here](#).