

Overview of COVID-19 Statewide Face Covering Requirements

Office of the Governor | July 7, 2020

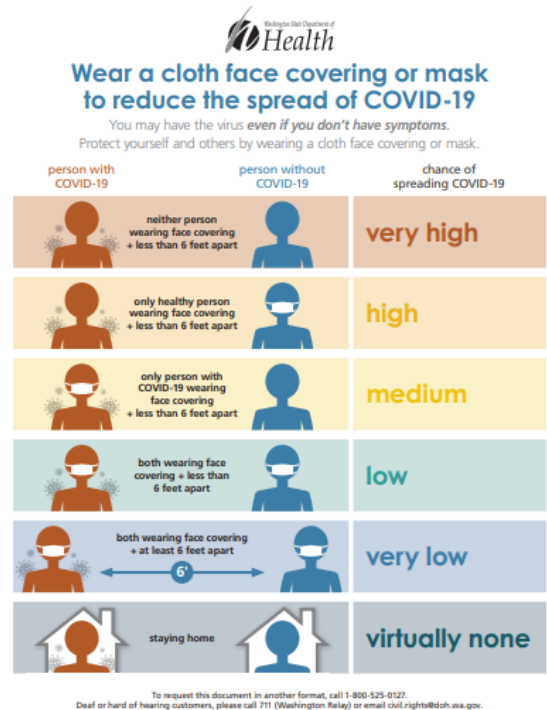
As Washington State counties begin to reopen and public health officials work to limit and stop the spread of COVID-19, it has become important for every individual and business to play a role in keeping one another safe and healthy.

**Any of us can carry the virus and not know it.
Face coverings prevent us from unknowingly
spreading the virus to others while
we talk or when we cough and sneeze.**

Face coverings are now required statewide in all public spaces because they are effective in slowing the spread of COVID-19, especially when combined with 6 feet of physical distance.

There are three face covering orders in place:

- The governor's Safe Start order and the Department of Labor & Industries [require employers](#) to provide at no cost appropriate face coverings or masks that must be worn by all employees who don't work alone.
- The secretary of Health has [ordered](#) all individuals to wear a face covering in any indoor public setting or when outdoors and unable to maintain 6 feet of physical distance from others.
- The governor's statewide order directing businesses to require and enforce the use of face coverings by all customers or clients. [order goes into effect July 7]



Face coverings can be unsafe for some people with certain health or medical issues. Those individuals are exempted from the requirement. No individual is required to provide proof or documentation to anyone at any time about their health or medical status except employers who may request medical documentation if an accommodation is requested by an employee. Children under of the age of 2 should not wear a face covering.

Best practices for business owners

Face coverings are required of employees, vendors, contractors, customers and visitors in the workplace, unless covered by a medical or other exemption. Businesses are encouraged to provide an accommodation for customers unable to wear a face covering safely.

Implementing face covering requirements at your business

If a customer or visitor is not wearing a face covering, businesses should take the following steps:

- A business representative or employee should politely educate the customer or visitor about the public health requirement to wear a mask or face covering. Businesses may choose to keep a supply of disposable masks to offer customers who do not have one.
- If the individual still declines to wear a mask or face covering, the business representative or employee should politely inquire as to whether the person has a medical condition or disability that prevents them from wearing a mask. Businesses CANNOT inquire about the details about a person's specific medical condition or disability and CANNOT ask for proof or documentation.
- For customers who are unable to wear a face covering, businesses are encouraged to offer some kind of accommodation for the customer such as curbside pickup, delivery or a scheduled appointment when physical distancing can be ensured.
- If a customer or individual refuses to wear a face covering but does not have a medical condition or disability that prevents them from wearing a mask, they should be politely told that the business cannot serve them and that they need to leave the premises. Under no circumstances should the business representative attempt to physically block an individual from entering or physically remove them from the premises.
- If the individual refuses to leave, the business representative should follow whatever procedures they normally follow if an individual refuses to leave the establishment when asked to do so (including contacting local law enforcement to indicate that the individual is trespassing).

Businesses with questions about the face covering orders or any other Safe Start related questions can contact the state's Business Response Center at <https://coronavirus.wa.gov/how-you-can-help/covid-19-business-and-worker-inquiries>.

Customer complaints

Customers who are concerned that a business is not adequately enforcing the face mask order or other Safe Start requirements can submit an anonymous complaint. The link to the [complaint form](#) is available on the Safe Start page of coronavirus.wa.gov. Violations can be enforced by Labor & Industries as a safety and health violation by the employer that could carry a penalty of nearly \$10,000 or more.

Individuals not following the DOH order on face coverings may be subject to a misdemeanor charge with a fine of up to \$100 and/or up to 90 days in county jail per RCW 43.70.130(7), RCW 70.05.120(4), and WAC 246-100-070(3).

Additional information

Additional information and commonly asked questions is available at www.coronavirus.wa.gov/masks and www.doh.wa.gov/masks. If you're an employer and have questions about the order regarding face coverings for employees, visit the state Department of Labor & Industries [common questions page](#).