
State of Wisconsin



Why are face coverings required?

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 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.

Governor Evers issued [Emergency Order #1](#) on September 22, requiring face coverings indoors and in enclosed spaces, with some exceptions. The order went into effect immediately, and will expire on November 21, or by a subsequent superseding emergency order (<https://evers.wi.gov/Documents/COVID19/Em001-SeptFaceCoverings.pdf>).

When do I need to wear a face covering?

People age 5 and older need to wear a face covering when **indoors or in an enclosed space, other than a private residence, and other people are present in the same room or enclosed space**. For example, you must wear a face covering while you are shopping in a store or using a taxi.

The order applies indoors *and* in enclosed spaces. What does “enclosed space” mean?

“Enclosed space” means a confined space that is open to the public where individuals congregate. For example, a ride-share vehicle is an enclosed space, but a private car is not an enclosed space because it is not open to the public.

If it’s just you or you and other members of your household in the enclosed space, you do not need to wear a face covering. However, if other people are in the same enclosed space, you need to wear a face covering.

Enclosed spaces include:

- Outdoor bars;
- Outdoor restaurants;
- Taxis and ride-share vehicles;
- Public transit;
- Outdoor park structures;
- Stadium or bleacher seating;
- Boats that are open to the public (e.g. tour boats, ferries).

Enclosed spaces does **not** include:

- Outdoor playgrounds;
 - Trails, bike paths, or hiking paths;
 - Outdoor parking lots;
 - Places that are not open to the public.
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What does it mean to be in the “same room” as another person?

A room is a space with closed walls that reach the floor and the ceiling. A cubicle is not a room. Similarly, plexiglass or other dividing material does not create a room unless the material reaches the floor and the ceiling and has closed walls. For example, a plexiglass screen at a grocery store check-out counter is not a room, and the clerk must wear a face covering.

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 or in an enclosed space 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 face covering.
- 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 face covering 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 competing in a sport or athletic competition?

If the competition is indoors, yes. If it is outdoors, no. Outdoor stadium seating or bleachers may be considered an enclosed space, so spectators should wear face coverings.

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 face covering on. This includes outdoor restaurants and outdoor 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](https://www.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>).

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. According to [CDC guidelines](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html#face-shields), 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 (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html#face-shields>).

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.

I wear glasses or safety glasses and they fog up when I wear a face covering. Do I still have to wear a face covering?

Yes, unless an exception applies. Wearing glasses is not an exception to the face covering order. Anti-fog sprays and treatments are available online, along with other tips on how to prevent fogged glasses.

Many industries and jobs already require the use of eye protection and a face covering, including but not limited to paint spraying, grinding of metal, concrete sawing and grinding, and some medical or veterinary procedures.

You do not need to wear a face covering if wearing a face covering while working would create a risk to the individual, as determined by government safety guidelines, such as OSHA guidelines or regulations, or if 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?

You do not need to wear a face covering in your own car unless it is being used as a ride-share (i.e. it's open to the public) and there is another person in the car with you. You have to wear a face covering if you're using a ride-share, taxi, 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](https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/protect.htm) 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) (<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.

I own a business and we have our own face covering policy. Does our policy still apply?

Employers and businesses may establish their own face covering requirements for their employees and customers, so long as it is, at a minimum, compliant with the statewide order and any local order. In other words, a business may impose a policy that is more restrictive than the statewide and local orders, but not less restrictive. Employers and businesses should consult their own legal counsel regarding how to enforce those requirements.

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. § 323.28](#).

Violations may be reported to your local public health official, who may report it to your local district attorney. District attorneys have statutory authority under [Wis. Stat. § 978.05\(2\)](#) to prosecute state forfeiture actions. Additionally, some counties or municipalities may have ordinances that allow for enforcement by other means.

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

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

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

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.