

Frequently Asked Questions – Public Health Order Requiring Facial Coverings

What is the difference between the statewide mandatory mask order and Tri-County Health Department's (TCHD) order requiring facial coverings?

- The [statewide order](#) requires masks indoors whereas TCHD requires wearing a mask or face covering both indoors and outdoors. The outdoor requirement is only in situations where a distance of six (6) feet from individuals who are not members of their household cannot be maintained.
- The statewide mask order went into effect at midnight on July 16, 2020 for 30 days. The statewide executive order was extended on August 14, 2020 ([Executive order D 2020 164](#)) and again on September 12, 2020 ([Executive order D 2020 190](#)) for an additional 30 days and may be extended again. TCHD mask order went into effect on Friday, July 24 and is in effect for 90 days and may also be extended.
- The statewide mask order includes the entire State of Colorado whereas TCHD covers the cities and counties in its jurisdiction and has an opt-out provision.

What cities and counties opted out of TCHD's order?

- Douglas County (unincorporated)
- Town of Deer Trail
- City of Brighton
- City of Castle Pines
- Town of Castle Rock
- Town of Bennet
- Arapahoe County East of Watkins Road to county line
- Town of Parker
- City of Glendale
- Columbine Valley

Do I still have to wear a mask if my city or county opted out of TCHD's order?

- Yes, people and businesses within the cities or counties that opted out of TCHD's order must continue to wear a face covering in Indoor Public Spaces as required by the statewide order until the state's order is rescinded or expires. Face coverings are also required for all "outdoor events" under the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's (CDPHE) Safer at Home public health order. Individuals within cities and counties that have opted out of the TCHD order must still wear a face covering outdoors when attending an "event."

What is the statewide mandatory mask order?

- [Executive Order D 2020 138](#) requires all people in Colorado over ten (10) years old to 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.
 - [TCHD's order](#) adds the additional requirement to wear face coverings outdoors when 6-foot distancing cannot be maintained.
- 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 or life-rite event.
 - Giving a speech for broadcast or an audience, if the audience is at least 25 feet away from the speaker. The audience members must wear face coverings.

Are the statewide and TCHD mask orders a law?

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

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. Masks are also required outdoors when individuals cannot maintain 6-foot distancing in many communities within the TCHD jurisdiction and in all jurisdictions when participating in outdoor events.

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.

Should children wear a face covering/mask?

- Children who are over 10 years old are required to wear a face covering.
- People who cannot medically tolerate a face covering are not required to wear a face covering.
- Children ages 2 and under should NOT wear masks or cloth face coverings. Parents or custodians or caregivers are strongly encouraged to have children between two (2) and ten (10) years old wear a face covering in accordance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines. Parents and custodians and caregivers must supervise use of face coverings by children to avoid misuse or unsafe conditions.

Why is age 10 the cutoff for the mask requirement?

- According to [CDPHE](#), 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.

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.

Am I still required to wear a face covering/mask if I have a medical condition?

- People who cannot wear a face covering due to a medical condition are not required to wear one, such as 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 (CDC). Read more from the [CDC about other reasons face coverings](#) may not be possible in every situation or for some people.
- Businesses are authorized to deny entry to any person not wearing a face covering, even if a medical exemption applies, and should offer accommodations like curbside pickup or outdoor seating to ensure the safety of all parties. For more information, please see Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment’s (CDPHE) [Civil Rights Guidance for Employers and Places of Public Accommodation during Safer at Home and in the Vast, Great Outdoors](#).

How do I prove I cannot medically tolerate a face covering? Do I need a written exemption?

- You do not need a written exemption.
- You may tell the establishment that you cannot medically tolerate a mask. But please be aware that if you cannot medically tolerate a mask, you should consider limiting any visits to businesses to protect yourself and others. If you need help getting groceries or other necessities, you can call 211 to be connected to local resources that may be able to help you.
- Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), businesses may offer reasonable accommodations for individuals with medical disabilities that make it so that they can’t wear a mask. This could include offering delivery or call-ahead curbside pickup instead of allowing entry into the building. [Click here for more information](#).
 - The CDC recommends businesses post a [sign](#) outside that says “Masks Required” and provide a phone number and email address for someone to contact should they be

unable to use a mask. Template signage can be found on [TCHD's Business Support Page](#) under "Print Materials."

Is there guidance available regarding both mask order and ADA compliance?

- Yes. If someone is unable to wear a mask due to a medical exemption, we encourage businesses to work with those exempted individuals to create alternative accommodations such as curbside pickup or delivery. For more information, refer to the [Guidance to Employers and Places of Public Accommodation Regarding Equal Opportunity Employment and Reasonable Accommodations Due to the Presence of COVID-19](#).

Can a business still deny me entry if I have a medical exemption to wearing a face covering?

- Yes. A business may exclude an individual with a disability from entering an establishment or participating in an activity or service if that individual's presence would result in a direct threat to the health and safety of others. This determination must not be based on generalizations or stereotypes, and must be based on an individual assessment. This does not apply to health care related places of public accommodation.
- Places of public accommodation should make reasonable efforts to allow individuals with a disability (i.e. breathing issues, facial disfigurement, etc.) that prevent them from wearing a mask to use a place of public accommodation, unless the place of public accommodation can demonstrate that it would cause an undue burden or that it would require any additional expense that would not otherwise be incurred.
- Reasonable accommodations may include a virtual experience rather than in-person, curbside pickup, outdoor seating rather than indoor, rental equipment to do an activity at home, a room to do an activity alone, or special hours to access goods or services alone. Some businesses, like airlines, may not be able to accommodate an individual who is unable to wear a face covering. In those situations, a business is still not required to allow an individual to enter an establishment without a mask.
- For more information, see: [Civil Rights Guidance for Employers and Places of Public Accommodation during Safer at Home and in the Vast, Great Outdoors](#), [Guidance to Employers and Places of Public Accommodation Regarding Equal Opportunity Employment and Reasonable Accommodations Due to The Presence of COVID-19](#), and [The ADA and Face Mask Policies](#).

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.
 - Museums.
 - Theaters.
 - Casinos.
 - Gyms, including areas around indoor pools, but not while swimming in the pool.

- Hair salons.
- All offices, lobbies, elevators.
- Malls, retail stores.
- Indoor businesses, common areas.
 - Medical facilities, nursing homes.
 - Restaurants (if not seated).
 - Libraries.
- If a business or entity provides services or goods both indoors and outdoors at a single location, a mask must be worn indoors and outdoors at the business or entity.
 - All enclosed indoor areas, whether publicly or privately owned or managed, except an individual's residence.

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?

- Yes, this applies to any indoor setting open to members of the public. If there are specific 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.
- Face coverings are not required while officiating a religious service but are still strongly recommended where possible. Those officiating services should be a minimum of 25 feet from attendees when speaking.

Do parties to a marriage need to wear a mask during their ceremony?

- No, masks may be removed if they would interfere with the performance of a life-rite ceremony. If they do not interfere with the ceremony, they should continue to be worn. For example, if parties to a marriage need to speak vows to an audience, they may remove their masks.

Does a speaker in a conference space — in which all attendees are masked and are 6-plus feet apart — need to wear a mask while speaking?

- You may remove your mask if delivering a speech to an audience. Please put your mask back on as soon as you are able. Speakers must be 25 feet away from the audience when speaking.

Do face coverings have to be worn in courthouses (i.e., during trial)?

- Unless it interferes with the integrity of the proceedings, mask-wearing is required. However, we recognize that the judicial branch is independent of the executive branch and may need to propose rules specific to trials (e.g., witnesses) that are reasonable and may require temporary removal of a mask. Judges are permitted to set rules for both their courthouse and individual trials.

Do I need to wear a mask while exercising at an indoor gym?

- Mask-wearing requirements apply to everyone indoors, including people exercising. If you are in an indoor room with other patrons who are not a part of your household, then you need to wear a mask. You may remove it temporarily if you need to catch your breath or safely perform an activity, but wear a mask as much as feasible.

What about indoor sports?

- Masks should be worn while playing indoor sports unless it interferes with the activity. You may remove the mask temporarily to catch your breath if needed, or if you can't wear appropriate safety equipment while wearing the mask. Wear a mask as much as feasible. This includes indoors sports where distance can be maintained, like tennis, if played indoors.

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 lifeguards at indoor pools have to wear masks?

- Lifeguards may remove their mask if they need to do so in order to safely perform an activity.

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 may be subject to civil or criminal penalties. You may also be in violation of county or municipal ordinances and subject to a ticket and/or fine.
- If you are asked to leave a store due to failure to wear a mask, and you refuse, you may be charged with 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?

- Businesses should refuse service to individuals not wearing masks. If a patron becomes combative or refuses to leave, contact local law enforcement, who can help diffuse the situation or intervene if the individual fails to comply. Please see CDC's guidance on [Limiting Workplace Violence Associated with COVID-19](#).

Is it ever OK to remove my mask at work?

- What if I'm alone in my office with the door closed?
 - If you are the only person in a room with the door closed, then you may remove your mask. If someone else enters the room, please put your mask back on. You must wear a mask in common areas like hallways, elevators, or breakrooms.
- Sitting at my cubicle spaced 6 feet away from my closest neighbor?
 - You must wear a mask in any shared, indoor space that accommodates people outside your household. This includes spaces divided by physically distanced cubicles. We require masks in such settings because Colorado has recently experienced outbreaks in

indoor, office-based settings. We continue to encourage employers to prioritize work from home.

- In the elevator? Break room? Hallway?
 - You must wear a mask in common areas like hallways, elevators, or breakrooms. If a common space is used for consuming meals (i.e., break rooms), follow restaurant guidance for that setting.
- 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. The CDC recommends adding a phone number and email address people unable to use a mask can contact. This will reduce the potential that an employee will have to manage a situation with an uncooperative, un-masked person.
 - Businesses should consider implementing alternatives to in-person service, such as curbside pick-up, contactless delivery, or assistance with services/products available online.
- Are there any situations in which a plexiglass barrier can replace the face-covering requirement indoors? Can plexiglass barriers be installed in public offices rather than requiring masks?
 - No. Plexiglass barriers may not substitute for face coverings. They may provide an added benefit, but cannot be used as a substitute.

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.

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.
- Masks should be comprised of multiple layers of fabric or material. A mask might be too thin or porous if you can easily feel your breath in front of you (or can easily blow out a candle) while wearing it, or if you can easily see through it when stretched.
- Masks with exhalation vents should not be used as infectious droplets can be exhaled.
- 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 recommend that the wearer be able to remove and put on their own mask without assistance.
- We encourage you to use cloth face coverings to preserve medical mask supplies for health care and other essential workers.

Are neck gaiters ok to use as a cloth face covering?

- Yes. TCHD is closely monitoring emerging research regarding face coverings to ensure we are providing the most current information. We believe that recent concerns about lack of protection

of neck gaiters is too preliminary to discourage their use although, that advice could change as we learn more.

Does a face shield that covers the nose and mouth meet the mask requirement?

- No, a face shield is not an acceptable substitute for a cloth or disposable face covering.

How do I correctly put on a face covering/mask?

1. Wash your hands before putting on your face covering
2. Put it over your nose and mouth and secure it under your chin
3. Fit it snugly against the sides of your face
4. Make sure you can breathe easily

How should a mask fit?

- 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 correctly take off a face covering/mask?

1. Untie the strings behind your head or stretch the ear loops
2. Handle only by the ties or ear loops
3. Fold outside corners together
4. Place covering in the [washing machine](#)
5. Be careful not to touch your eyes, nose, and mouth when removing and wash hands immediately after removing.

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

- Yes. 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.
- It is possible to spread or be exposed to COVID-19 even while wearing a mask, however [masks reduce the likelihood of spreading disease](#).
- Face coverings are most important 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.
- When distancing, people tend to speak louder to project their voices further, yet another reason why masks and distancing work together for the best protection.

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.”

Where can I get a face covering/mask?

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

Frequently Asked Questions – Public Health Order Requiring Facial Coverings in Schools

Do children need to wear a mask in school?

- Although not required by the state or TCHD mask orders, we highly encourage cloth face coverings over the nose and mouth for students 3 to 10 years old, including during in-person instruction (including sitting at desks), unless the student has a medical intolerance, disability, or education reason for not wearing a mask.
- Cloth face coverings over the nose and mouth are required for students ages 11 years and older, including during in-person instruction (including sitting at desks), unless the student has a medical intolerance, disability, or education reason for not wearing a mask.

When are masks not required in schools?

- Staff and students do not need to wear masks or face coverings while eating, but they should continue to social distance.
- Students ages 3-10: The executive order does not require masks for this age group. If local orders require masks for this age group, check the local order for clarification on requirements in educational settings.
- Students ages 11 and older: A mask is not required while outside for recess or exercise, as long as 6 feet of distancing can be maintained.
- Masks may be temporarily removed if they interfere with special educational needs, such as hearing-impaired students and for English learners.
- Masks should be removed during naptime.

What if my child cannot medically tolerate a mask?

- Parents are encouraged to work with their school health services team or COVID-19 school coordinator to discuss their child’s medical needs.

What does it mean to be medically unable to tolerate a mask?

- The requirement to wear a mask does not apply to individuals who cannot medically tolerate a face covering. In general, this means a person who has trouble breathing or who is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance. Parents are encouraged to work directly with their child’s medical provider to determine the health needs of their child in the school setting.

If my child cannot medically tolerate a mask, do we need to provide the school with a doctor’s note?

- The process used to verify “medical intolerance” is determined at the school or school district level. Parents are encouraged to work with their school health services team or COVID-19 school coordinator to discuss their child’s medical needs.

How are teachers made aware of students who cannot medically tolerate a mask, especially in high school settings?

- Schools are encouraged to establish a process for communicating essential information to school staff while maintaining confidentiality.

Why should we promote mask use if exposures are treated the same regardless of mask use?

- Students are together for long periods of time at school, and the science is evolving on how masks protect people. As we learn more about the virus, it is best to use and layer all the tools available to protect people: social distancing, mask use, and isolation and quarantine.
- While masks do not factor into the determination of close contacts, we are studying their effects closely to determine if that may change sometime in the future.

What if my school or school district is not abiding by the mask requirements?

- Cloth face coverings over the nose and mouth are required for students ages 11 years and older, including during in-person instruction (including sitting at desks), unless the student has a medical intolerance, disability, or education reason for not wearing a mask.
- If a school or school district is not abiding by these requirements, a parent or community member should contact the county local public health authority. If you are within the TCHD jurisdiction, you should call 303-220-9200 to report noncompliance.

Find more ways to stay safe and healthy with COVID-19 in our lives at www.tchd.org/Coronavirus or at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html, and Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, covid19.colorado.gov/mask-guidance, web pages.