



State of California—Health and Human
Services Agency
**California Department of
Public Health**



May 3, 2021

TO: All Californians

SUBJECT: Guidance for the Use of Face Coverings

Note: The following guidance supersedes face coverings guidance released on November 16, 2020. This updated guidance mandates face masks in indoor settings, with few exceptions.

Background

The risk for COVID-19 exposure and infection will continue to remain until we reach community immunity from vaccinations. Since the start of the pandemic, we have learned a lot about COVID-19 transmission: a large proportion of people who are infected do not have symptoms (asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic) but play an important part in community spread, and the virus is transmitted through the air and concentrates indoors. The use of face coverings by everyone can limit the release of infected droplets when talking, coughing, sneezing, singing, exercising, shouting, or other forms of increased respiration, and reinforce physical distancing by signaling the need to remain apart. A well-fitting face covering can also provide the wearer some protection from COVID-19.

The purpose of this guidance is to provide information about when face coverings are required for members of the general public. It does not substitute for existing guidance about physical distancing and hand hygiene. In the workplace, employers subject to the Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standards (ETS), must ensure that all workers are provided and properly wear face coverings as required by the ETS.

For more information on face mask types, fit, and filtration, refer to the CDPH Face Mask Tips and Resources.

Guidance

1. For **fully vaccinated** persons, face coverings are not required outdoors except when attending crowded outdoor events, such as live performances, parades, fairs, festivals, sports events, or other similar settings.
2. For **unvaccinated** persons, face coverings are **required** outdoors *any time physical distancing cannot be maintained*, including when attending crowded outdoor events, such as live performances, parades, fairs, festivals, sports events, or other similar settings.
3. In indoor settings outside of one's home, including public transportation, face coverings continue to be **required** regardless of vaccination status, except as outlined below.
4. As defined in the CDPH Fully Vaccinated Persons Guidance, fully vaccinated people can*:
 - Visit, without wearing masks or physical distancing, with other fully vaccinated people in indoor or

outdoor settings; and

- Visit, without wearing masks or physical distancing, with unvaccinated people (including children) from a single household who are at low risk for severe COVID-19 disease in indoor and outdoor settings

5. Exemptions:

- The following specific **settings** are exempt from face covering requirements:
 - Persons in a car alone or solely with members of their own household,
 - Persons who are working alone in a closed office or room,
 - Persons who are obtaining a medical or cosmetic service involving the nose or face for which temporary removal of the face covering is necessary to perform the service,
 - Workers who wear respiratory protection, or
 - Persons who are specifically exempted from wearing face coverings by other CDPH guidance.
- The following **individuals** are exempt from wearing face coverings at all times:
 - Persons younger than two years old. Very young children must not wear a face covering because of the risk of suffocation.
 - Persons with a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that prevents wearing a face covering. This includes persons with a medical condition for whom wearing a face covering could obstruct breathing or who are unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without assistance.*
 - Persons who are hearing impaired, or communicating with a person who is hearing impaired, where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication.
 - Persons for whom wearing a face covering would create a risk to the person related to their work, as determined by local, state, or federal regulators or workplace safety guidelines.

*Note: Persons exempted from wearing a face covering due to a medical condition who are employed in a job involving regular contact with others must wear a non-restrictive alternative, such as a face shield with a drape on the bottom edge, as long as their condition permits it.

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