

Face Coverings Questions & Answers



April 2, 2020 Mayor Parris directed all Lancaster community members to wear a face covering while in public. The ordinance requiring face covers went before council, April 3, during a special telephonic meeting. The ordinance and meeting will be available on the [City's website](#).

Lancaster is the first city via ordinance to require individuals to wear a proper face covering, which shields their mouth and nose, while in public places.

Guidelines below have been set by the CDC and Los Angeles Public Health.

What is a face covering?

A face covering is a material that covers the nose and mouth. It can be secured to the head with ties or straps or simply wrapped around the lower face. It can be made of a variety of materials, such as cotton, silk, or linen. A cloth face covering may be factory-made or sewn by hand or can be improvised from household items such as scarves, T-shirts, sweatshirts, or towels. The City is not requiring a specific type of mask, however, it is required that your nose and mouth be covered; a face cover should act as a physical barrier between your mouth and nose and the immediate environment around you.

Why wear a face cover?

Recent information has indicated that covering your nose and mouth can slow the spread of COVID-19 because:

- Individuals can be contagious before the onset of symptoms. You may be contagious and do not know it. If you have covered your nose and mouth, it can limit the spread of COVID-19.
- We touch our face less when our face is covered. Touching your face after touching something contaminated with COVID-19 increases your chances of getting sick with COVID-19.

How well do face coverings work to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

Their primary role is to reduce the release of infectious particles into the air when someone speaks, coughs, or sneezes, including someone who has COVID-19 but feels well. Face coverings are not a substitute for physical distancing, washing hands, and staying home when ill, but they may be helpful when combined with these primary interventions.

Why might I cover my face now, when a face covering was not recommended before?

The face covering was not previously recommended for the general public for protection from getting COVID-19. We are learning that individuals may be contagious and spread COVID-19 without their knowledge, even if they do not have symptoms. This new information suggests that a face cover may protect others from infection. Wearing a face cover may help prevent the spread of droplets that might be infectious.

When should I wear a face covering?

A face covering over your nose and mouth should be used when you must be in public for essential activities, such as shopping at the grocery store. Wearing a cloth face covering does not eliminate the need to physically distance yourself from others and to wash your hands frequently.

Who should not wear a face covering?

Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children younger than 2 years of age, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cover without assistance.

What are my face covering options?

Acceptable, reusable face covering options for the general public include:

- Bandana
- Neck gaiter
- Homemade face covering
- Scarf
- Tightly woven fabric, such as cotton t-shirts and some types of towels

Can I use an N95 respirator or surgical mask instead?

Purchasing a respirator or face mask intended for the healthcare setting (including N95 respirators and surgical masks) is strongly discouraged. Medical respirators and face masks are worn for protection by healthcare staff and those workers who provide care to a person who might have COVID-19. In contrast, face covering for the general public is intended to prevent COVID-19 transmission to others by someone who might not know they are infected. Since the intent of the face cover is to primarily protect others rather than the person wearing the cover, a medical face mask is not necessary. Medical respirators and face masks are in short supply and will be increasingly needed to safely provide care for persons with COVID-19, it is critical that these medical items not be used outside of the healthcare setting.

Is a face cover required?

Yes, the ordinance may be found at cityoflancasterca.org. Face covers help slow the spread of COVID-19 but does not replace other social distancing requirements.

How should I care for a cloth face covering?

It's a good idea to wash your cloth face covering frequently, ideally after each use, or at least daily. Have a bag or bin to store cloth face coverings until they can be laundered with detergent and hot water and dried on a hot cycle. If you must re-wear your cloth face covering before washing, wash your hands immediately after putting it back on and avoid touching your face. Discard cloth face coverings that:

- No longer cover the nose and mouth
- Have stretched out or damaged ties or straps
- Cannot stay on the face
- Have holes or tears in the fabric

Do I still need to stay at least 6 feet away from people if wearing a face covering?

Yes. Wearing face coverings is an additional public health measure people should take to reduce the spread of COVID-19. CDC still recommends that you stay at least 6 feet away from other people (social distancing), frequent hand cleaning and other everyday preventive actions. A face covering is not intended to protect the wearer, but it may prevent the spread of virus from the wearer to others. This would be especially important if someone is infected but does not have symptoms. [View CDC's guidance on how to protect yourself.](#)