



## Requirements for the Use of Face Coverings and Masks April 30, 2021

North Carolina took early and aggressive action to slow the spread of COVID-19 in our state. These actions prevented our healthcare systems from being overwhelmed and provided valuable time to build our state's capacity to respond to this crisis. Now, we are seeing increasing cases and hospitalizations from COVID-19 across our state. With more North Carolinians leaving their homes as we ease restrictions, the risk for COVID-19 exposure and infection increases.

We have important goals: to protect our families, friends and neighbors from getting seriously ill, to restore our economy and get people back to work, and to get our children back to school. To attain these goals, we must remain vigilant and continue to work together to combat the spread of COVID-19 by taking preventive actions to slow the spread of COVID-19. The preventive actions include the 3 Ws: **Wear a cloth face covering.** **Wait 6 feet apart from others.** **Wash your hands.**

Over the past few months, we have learned a lot about COVID-19 transmission. We know now that people who are infected, but do not have symptoms, can infect others by spreading respiratory droplets through activities like speaking, coughing, laughing, and singing. New scientific evidence suggests that public use of face coverings can help reduce disease transmission. Face coverings are not a substitute for other important prevention practices and should be used **in addition** to staying 6 feet apart, washing hands, and staying home when ill.

This document updates existing NC DHHS guidance for the use of face coverings by the general public when outside the home. It mandates that face coverings be worn statewide as outlined below. It is not a substitute for existing guidance about social distancing and handwashing.

### Guidance for People

As of April 30th, face coverings are required in all public indoor settings if there are non-household members present, regardless of the distance away, unless an exception applies. Face coverings are recommended in public outdoor settings for people who have not been fully vaccinated if individuals are unable to maintain six feet of social distance with non-household members. They are strongly recommended for all people (vaccinated and unvaccinated) in outdoor settings that are crowded, dense, and higher-risk including outdoors bars and venues.

## Guidance for Businesses

Businesses are required to have patrons and employees wear face coverings whether they are inside unless an exception applies.

Employers who have workers who perform work outside of their home in North Carolina and have not already provided face coverings for their workers shall make good-faith efforts to provide a one-week supply of reusable Face Coverings or a new disposable face covering daily as soon as possible for workers to use at their place of employment. New face coverings should be provided during the workday if the worker's face covering becomes soiled, torn or wet.

## Guidance for Face Coverings and Exercise

All workers and guests are required to wear face coverings when they are inside a fitness or recreation establishment, regardless of whether they are exercising. All individuals are required to wear a face covering if:

- Indoors and not within their own home; or
- Indoors at home and within six feet of someone who does not reside in the individual's household.

However, people need not wear a face covering indoors while exercising if:

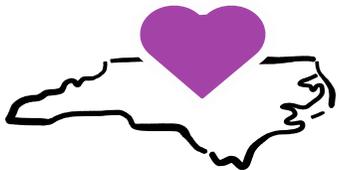
- One of the exceptions previously listed above, such as a medical or behavioral condition;
- If you have symptoms while strenuously exercising such as trouble breathing, dizziness, or lightheadedness;
- If you are wearing equipment like a mouthguard or helmet and are having trouble breathing;
- If you are doing any activity in which the face covering could become entangled and a choking hazard or impair vision in high risk activities such as gymnastics, cheerleading, or tumbling; or
- If you are doing activities that may cause the face covering to become wet, like when swimming or other activities in a pool, lake, water attraction, or similar body of water.

## Guidance for Schools

All adults (workers, teachers, guests, other adults) and children five (5) years and older at public and non-public schools in North Carolina are required to wear a face covering when indoors, at all times unless an exception applies.

For more information on school guidance please refer to [StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit](#) and [StrongSchools NC Non-public Health Toolkit](#).

For Frequently Asked Questions, please review the face covering [FAQ](#).



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Protect your family and neighbors.**

**Learn more at [nc.gov/covid19](https://nc.gov/covid19).**



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