



FAQs on **FACE COVERINGS**

Under Governor Larry Hogan's direction, state agencies continue to develop comprehensive and coordinated prevention and response plans for coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) will communicate directly with the public, providing updates as this situation develops and accurate information about how to protect yourself and your family. If you have questions about COVID-19 that are not answered here, call your local health department or dial 2-1-1. For information and resources pertaining to the business community, please visit the Maryland Department of Commerce's website here.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A FACE COVERING?

Face coverings protect both the wearer and others from being infected by COVID-19 by blocking the spread of both large and small respiratory droplets containing the virus.

WHEN MUST I WEAR A FACE COVERING?

The Governor's expanded Executive Order requires all Marylanders over the age of five to wear face coverings in the public spaces of all facilities and businesses across the state, to include any work area where interaction with others is likely. Face coverings will also be required in outdoor areas whenever it is not possible to maintain physical distancing. The expanded Order continues to provide certain exceptions, including for medical conditions or disabilities. [Read the Governor's Order](#).

In businesses and office environments, face coverings are required in publicly accessible areas, as well as all work areas where employees are likely to interact with other employees or individuals, even if briefly, such as common areas or open offices. Face coverings are still highly encouraged but not required if an employee can isolate or separate their work area, either by closing doors or using other physical barriers to maintain six foot distance from other individuals at all times, including individuals in adjacent cubicles or hallways. Even when practicing social distancing, masks or face coverings must be worn when walking through hallways or when two or more people are together in a space such as an office, conference room, or restroom.

WHAT IS A FACE COVERING?

A face covering fully covers a person's nose and mouth and is secured to the person's head. In the Governor's Executive Order, face coverings include cloth face coverings, and full-face shields. Cloth face coverings are recommended by both CDC and the Maryland Department of Health to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The CDC has detailed guidance and instructions regarding homemade cloth face coverings available [here](#). This does not include material with visible holes or gaps in them like lace, knitted material, crochet, and/or mesh. Face coverings with exhalation valves should also not be used as they allow unfiltered air to escape to others. The face coverings recommended are not surgical masks or N-95 respirators. Those are critical supplies that continue to be needed by healthcare workers and other medical first responders, as recommended by current CDC guidance. Face shields are acceptable face coverings. However, MDH strongly recommends, but does not require, also wearing a cloth face covering, if using a face shield.

WHO MAY HAVE DIFFICULTY WEARING FACIAL COVERINGS?

Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2 (and under the Executive Order, are not required under the age of 5), anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance. Customers with disabilities who are unable to wear a face covering shall be provided reasonable accommodations per the Americans with Disabilities Act ([ADA Title II and III](#)). Customers cannot be asked invasive questions about a disability or asked to provide medical documentation or other proof of a disability. Employees or staff that cannot wear a face covering due to a disability may request reasonable accommodations in accordance with the employer's disability policies and procedures ([ADA Title I](#)). An employer's policies and procedures may require documentation to grant reasonable accommodations.

WHAT ARE REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE DIFFICULTY WEARING FACIAL COVERINGS?

Customers with disabilities or medical conditions who are unable to wear a face covering must be provided with an opportunity to receive the same goods and services as customers without disabilities or medical conditions. Businesses should engage the customer in an interactive process to determine possible alternative methods of service that would allow the business to keep its employees and other customers safe, while still providing service/goods to the customer. This may include but is not limited to, curbside delivery, allowing pick up of goods by a representative, telephone appointments, or ordering by telephone with delivery.

For more guidance on the ADA, contact the Mid-Atlantic ADA Center at www.adainfo.org or 1-800-949-4232. For guidance on COVID19 and employees with disabilities, refer to bit.ly/employee-accommodations.

ARE FACE SHIELDS EFFECTIVE AT PREVENTING COVID-19 INFECTIONS?

Face shields that cover the eyes, nose, and mouth (full-face shields) can add to the protection of cloth face coverings, especially because of the additional eye protection. In addition, they may be more effective at blocking large respiratory droplets from people who are sneezing or coughing. However, MDH strongly recommends using a face shield only when also wearing a cloth face covering for anyone who can wear a cloth face covering.