



Frequently Asked Questions

[Emergency Order EO-13 version 3: Mask/Face Covering Order](#)

Updated November 12, 2020

1. What has changed in the latest update to the emergency order?

This update has eliminated several exceptions to the mask mandate. As community transmission levels have gone up and we have learned more about spread, it has become clear that the previous version had too many exceptions relative to the needs of our community. Specifically, masks (or face coverings) are now required for school-age children, over age five; for workers in unenclosed workspaces like cubicles if they are not completely alone; and for individuals exercising or playing sports indoors. And businesses are now required to do more to enforce the mask mandate. The policy is “No Mask/No Entry.” Individuals with disabilities that prevent mask-wearing should seek alternative accommodations, such as curbside or delivery service, or may be permitted by businesses to use a face shield instead of a mask. The updated order also requires masks or face coverings in outdoor settings when six feet of physical distancing from non-household members cannot be maintained.

2. Why require masks and face coverings for people exercising or playing sports indoors? Is that safe?

Indoor settings where people are breathing heavily due to exertion are high-risk settings, and masks reduce (but do not eliminate) the risk of spreading COVID-19.

The State of Alaska has been strongly recommending masks during exercise for over a month. Read their blog post here: <http://www.dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/Pages/COVID-19/blog/20201009.aspx>

3. Why require masks for school age children?

We know that children can get COVID-19 and can spread COVID-19, even though often they do not show symptoms. They can spread the virus to individuals who may have more severe illness. Additionally, we do not know the long-term effects of having COVID-19 on children, and we want to prevent exposure among children.

4. I hear a lot of mixed things about wearing masks. Do they really work?

Yes. Early in the pandemic, there was some uncertainty about whether masks effectively protected people from COVID-19. Since then, the evidence has conclusively shown that while masks don't bring total protection, they are effective at reducing transmission, and are strongly recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the State of Alaska, and the Anchorage Health Department.

5. Where do I have to wear a mask?

Masks must be worn in indoor public settings and communal spaces. This includes grocery stores and other retail stores, restaurants, personal care facilities, as well as the communal areas of offices and other buildings. They must also be worn at indoor and outdoor gatherings, and outdoors when six feet of physical distancing from non-household members cannot be maintained.

6. Where can I take my mask off?

Masks do not have to be worn outdoors when six feet of physical distancing from non-household members can be maintained. Masks can also be removed indoors when an employee is alone in an enclosed office or workspace, or in an unenclosed workspace if the employee is completely alone.

7. Do I have to wear a mask outside on the street?

No, unless six feet of physical distancing from others cannot be maintained.

8. My building is open to the public; what spaces in my office building are considered communal?

Areas outside an individual's fully enclosed office are considered communal. This includes lobbies, elevators, hallways, garages, break rooms, etc. Personal workspaces that are unenclosed need mask usage except when an individual is totally alone.

9. My building is closed to the public and our employees are adequately spaced by a six-foot distance. May they take off their masks at their desks while they are working? Is there a time limit on how long their mask may be removed?

Individuals can remove their masks if they are in their own totally enclosed office, or if they are totally alone in an unenclosed workspace. Otherwise, they must wear their mask.

10. I play hockey. Could I use a modified bubble mask instead of a cloth face covering?

No. Bubble masks are vented to allow for airflow in/out of the helmet. Instead, utilize face coverings that cover the nose and mouth and rest snugly above the nose, below the mouth, and on the sides of the face. Hockey equipment manufacturers like CCM produce hockey-specific face coverings that work well.

11. May I use a glass partition between my fitness instructors and their class instead of requiring them to wear cloth face coverings?

No.

12. Is the mask mandate in effect in churches and other places of worship?

Yes. Masks must be worn in public, communal indoor settings.

13. Is the mask mandate in effect in drive thru coffee houses and curbside pickup areas?

Yes. Masks must be worn in indoor public settings, including in businesses providing food preparation, delivery or takeout. Baristas serving customers coffee, even if they are alone within the coffee hut, are still coming into close contact with customers and should be wearing a mask. Drivers interacting with employees at these settings should also wear a mask.

14. I have a disability that makes wearing a mask dangerous or difficult. Do I have to wear a mask? What can I do to keep myself and others safe?

Individuals for whom wearing a mask would be unsafe due to a disability do not need to wear a mask, they may wear a face shield instead. Additionally, individuals who are communicating with those who are hearing impaired or deaf may wear a face shield instead of a mask or face covering. Where wearing a face shield is also impossible, individuals should seek accommodations from businesses such as curbside or delivery service.

15. Do children have to wear masks?

School-age children five and up are required to wear masks or face coverings, including in schools. Masks or face coverings are recommended for children between the ages of two and five years old, but not required for these ages. Daycares serving preschool age children do not need to enforce mask usage by children. Children under the age of two are exempt from wearing masks.

Mask Procurement Questions:

16. Where can I get a mask if I don't have one?

Please visit our [coronavirus response website](#) to see a full list of local businesses selling masks.

If you represent a business that interacts with the public you can contact the [Frontline Business Safety Initiative](#) for masks, gloves and other personal protective equipment.

If you represent a medical office in need of masks and other personal protective equipment you can [fill out an order form](#) with the Emergency Operations Center.

17. Can I make my own mask?

Yes. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has [instructions](#) on how to make sew or no-sew masks.

18. Is there a specific kind of mask I have to wear?

Face coverings and masks must cover your nose and mouth and can be made of a wide variety of materials. Face coverings may include store-bought cloth face coverings, handmade masks, bandanas or cloth scarves. N95 masks and surgical masks are also acceptable. On the other hand, mesh masks, lace masks, or other coverings with visible holes, gaps, or vents in the design do not count as face coverings, and masks with a valve or vents to promote easy exhalation do not qualify.

Mask Use:

19. Should I maintain physical distance even when I'm wearing a mask?

Yes. Physical distance is an important way to protect yourself and those around you. You should continue to keep six feet of distance between you and others while wearing a mask.

20. When is it ok to touch my mask?

You should only touch your mask in order to put it on or remove it. You should wash your hands before touching your mask.

21. How often should I clean my mask?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [recommends](#) that cloth face coverings be washed after each use. Whether you're using a cloth mask or a medical grade one, visit this [website](#) for proper mask use and storage tips.

22. I am a business owner. What should I do if someone enters my business without a mask?

Businesses must refuse service to those who do not wear a mask or face covering and are responsible for compelling individuals to leave if they refuse to comply with the mask mandate. Businesses may be subject to fines and other penalties for failing to enforce the mask mandate. Businesses should follow the Americans with Disabilities Act and other applicable laws for individuals who specifically request an accommodation because of a disability. This involves considering ways to accommodate that individual including permitting entrance with a face shield instead of a mask, or serving the customer in an alternative way such as through curbside service.

Mask Enforcement Questions:

23. Do businesses need to consider accommodations for individuals with disabilities?

Yes. Some individuals in our community have disabilities which prevent the wearing of masks or face coverings. Private businesses are required to consider modifications to the mask mandate for individuals who request an accommodation because of a disability. Businesses may choose to allow those individuals to enter with a face shield in lieu of a mask. Businesses alternatively may consider a range of accommodations to provide access to their goods or services, including curbside, delivery, or telephonic service. Before denying all accommodations business should consider their obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act, which requires accommodations except where the accommodation would be a fundamental alteration of their business, present an undue burden, or result in a direct threat to the business/employees. All 3 exceptions to accommodation requirements under the ADA are based on the individual circumstances of each case.

24. I am a business owner. What legal repercussions might there be if I refuse service to someone who is not wearing a mask and states that a disability prevents them from wearing one?

The ADA does not require businesses to allow a customer physical entry to a store without a mask or face covering during a pandemic. Businesses are best protected from legal repercussions by considering alternative accommodations. Emergency Order EO-13 suggests businesses consider several types of accommodations. Those accommodations include: offering curbside service, delivery, or allowing people claiming a disability to use a face shield instead. Businesses are not required to offer an accommodation if doing so would require a fundamental alteration of their business, present an undue burden, or result in a direct threat to the business/employees.

25. If a business isn't enforcing the mask order, how do I file a complaint?

You may send an email to COVID-19-business@anchorageak.gov, or you can file online at <https://www.muni.org/anchorageworks/CRM/ServiceRequest/ServiceRequestCategory>. When filing online, choose [Land Use/Zoning request and Report a violation of an Emergency Order](#) and then Request Type: COVID 19.