

Missouri Interim Guidance on Homemade and Alternative Face Coverings for COVID-19



Note: The situation regarding COVID-19 is rapidly changing as is our knowledge of this new disease. This guidance is based on the best information currently available and does not constitute medical advice or advocate specific treatments or approaches. Additional information regarding use of cloth face coverings can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>.

What is being recommended?

In accordance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations, all individuals in the State of Missouri may choose to wear a cloth face covering when in a public setting where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies), especially in areas of significant community-based transmission. Due to a nationwide shortage of facemasks (also known as surgical masks) and N-95 respirators, these should be reserved for healthcare workers and others in direct contact with known or suspected COVID-19 patients.

Why is this being recommended now?

Studies are beginning to show that individuals in close proximity to others may transmit the virus that causes COVID-19 without having developed symptoms themselves. Homemade cloth face coverings offer some degree of protection against large infectious droplets, such as mucus or saliva, when speaking, sneezing, or coughing. This particularly protects those around the person wearing the face covering and helps people who may have the virus and do not know it from transmitting it to others. Face coverings may also limit the wearer from touching their own mouth and nose.

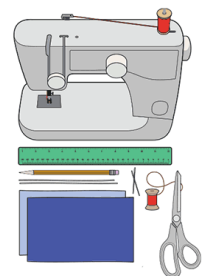


How should I wear a cloth face covering?

A cloth face covering should fit snugly but comfortably over the mouth and nose and against the side of the face, and be secured with ties or ear loops.

How do I make a cloth face covering?

A cloth face covering should include multiple layers of fabric but still allow for breathing without restriction (generally 3-4 or fewer layers). It should also be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape. The CDC has a good resource for making a cloth face covering here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/DIY-cloth-face-covering-instructions.pdf>. Numerous other sources are available on the internet. Various materials have been tested to see how well they filter particles and typical materials around the house, like a pillow case or cotton t-shirt, have been shown to block some particles and provide some protection.



How do I take off and clean my face covering?

Individuals should be careful not to touch their eyes, nose, or mouth when removing their cloth face covering. Remove when hand washing or hand sanitizer is available to immediately perform hand hygiene after removing. Routine laundering of the face covering is recommended.

What else should I be doing to limit the spread of COVID-19?

Individuals should avoid leaving their homes or places of residence except as needed. If you must be in public settings, face coverings should be used in conjunction with the other health recommendations already in place, such as maintaining 6 feet distance from other people, using proper cough/sneeze etiquette, frequent hand-washing, and avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Individuals who are sick, or have close contact with someone who is sick, should stay home.



What precautions should I know about?

Even simple cloth face coverings can make it harder to breathe. Individuals should take care not to use materials or excessive layers that restrict breathing ability. All individuals should take care to monitor their own health while wearing a mask or face covering, and consult a doctor with any concerns.

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

The cloth face coverings recommended are not surgical masks or N-95 respirators. Those are critical supplies that must continue to be reserved for healthcare workers and other medical first responders, as recommended by current CDC guidance. If you are a caregiver for an individual with the virus, every attempt should be made to get a surgical facemask or N-95 respirator.

How should an employer use this guidance?

Identifying and mitigating exposures to the virus that causes COVID-19 before work begins should be an initial step taken in any facility. Engineering and administrative controls that prevent or reduce exposures should be used with any policy that considers use of face coverings by employees. Face covering use does not replace good business practices to maintain a healthy work environment, including encouraging sick employees to stay home, supporting good respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene, and performing routine environmental cleaning and disinfection. Employee policies should include considerations for good contamination control as well as employee's medical conditions that may preclude use of face coverings. Consult with infection control, industrial hygiene, or a public health agency for guidance or facility-specific recommendations.

For more information: www.health.mo.gov/coronavirus

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