

BY ORDER OF ORANGE COUNTY

Face Coverings

REQUIRED in Public



Frequently Asked Questions about the Face Covering Mandate

Why do I need to wear a cloth face covering?

Cloth face coverings, also called masks, slow the spread of COVID-19 by preventing the spread of germs. Cases of COVID-19 in Orange County and North Carolina continue to rise, meaning additional steps are needed to combat this pandemic.

Who has to wear a cloth face covering in public?

Any person age 12 or older must wear a face covering at all times while in public settings.

This applies to:

- All customers, employees and other users of restaurants and grocery and retail stores while they are indoors.
- All occupants of public transportation vehicles.
- Anyone in an indoor or outdoor situation where they cannot maintain a 6-foot physical distance from others.

Do I need to practice social distancing if I wear a cloth face covering?

Yes. Wearing a face covering does not take the place of other public health precautions like maintaining six feet of physical distance between yourself and others, washing your hands (or using hand sanitizer) and avoiding touching your face.

What is a face covering?

A face covering includes anything that covers your nose and mouth, such as a mask, scarf or bandana. Make sure your cloth face covering:

- Fits snugly but comfortably against the side of the face
- Completely covers the nose and mouth
- Is secured with ties or ear loops
- Includes multiple layers of fabric
- Allows for breathing without restriction
- Can be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape

Who is not required to wear face coverings?

A face covering is not required:

- For people whose religious beliefs prevent them from wearing a face covering.
- For those who can't wear a face covering due to a medical or behavioral condition.
- For children under 12 years old.
- For restaurant customers while they are dining.
- In private offices.
- When complying with directions of law enforcement officers.
- In settings where it is not practical or feasible to wear a face covering when obtaining or rendering goods or services.
- While with family or household members.

The declaration states face coverings are not required while with family or household members, but what is the difference?

Family is everyone related to you (mother, father, sister, brother). Household members are the people who live together and who may not be related. A household can be considered a “germ bubble.” During the pandemic, people are encouraged to commit to the germs of the people they live with. But, they are discouraged from sharing germs with extended family. For instance, if a couple live with their child, they have formed a “germ bubble.” It is not recommended that they have close contact with non-household family members as to not spread the disease.



However, staying connected to friends and family is extremely important. In order to combat isolation take advantage of free

video chat apps such as WhatsApp, Skype and Google Hangout, or simply call a friend. If you will be seeing non-household members in person be sure to stay six feet away and wear face coverings. Be especially vigilant around family members who are considered at high risk of contracting COVID-19, such as older adults or people with underlying medical conditions.

Should children wear cloth face coverings?

The Orange County declaration exempts children under 12 from the requirement, but the CDC still recommends anyone over age 2 to wear cloth face coverings if practical. Cloth face coverings should NOT be put on children under age 2 because of the danger of suffocation and should not be put on anyone who could not remove the mask by themselves.

How can I get a face covering if I don't have one?

Many retail outlets, such as convenience stores and grocery stores, have them for sale. The Orange County website contains information on how to make your own, including a no-sew option: www.orangecountync.gov/masks

Local governments within Orange County provide face coverings to people who need them. Visit their websites for more information as it becomes available.

How will this be enforced?

The declaration will be enforced through education and public awareness. The mandate's goal is to protect the public health by increasing the use of masks. Individuals who do not feel comfortable in any setting should leave that setting. If you feel a business is failing to adhere to the policy, please fill out this form on the Orange County website so that an Environmental Health Specialist can work with the business to comply with the requirement: www.orangecountync.gov/FormCenter/Health-6/Report-a-Complaint-Related-to-a-Food-Ser-54

If you feel uncomfortable while conducting business, you may also speak with the manager and express your concerns. If you see someone without a face covering, assume they have a valid reason for not wearing one and increase your distance from that person. The most loving thing you can do for your community is to take care of yourself by wearing a face covering when out in public. We are all in this together.

As a community, we must also reflect on the criminalization and persecution of face and head coverings for communities of color and certain faith communities. Therefore, this mandate may create some fear, hesitancy, and anxiety for some members of our faith and communities of color.

How can businesses get customers to wear masks?

Businesses are encouraged to post a sign notifying customers of the mandate. Orange County has created signs for businesses in multiple languages. They are available at: www.orangecountync.gov/masks

Businesses also are encouraged to make disposable masks available for customers who don't have one or offer affordable masks for sale. Ultimately, people will shop where they feel safe. For people who are not able to wear a face covering, businesses are encouraged to make curbside service available to them.

Can I be asked to leave a store or denied entry for not wearing a face covering?

At their discretion, businesses can deny entrance to any person who does not wear a mask. Individual stores may have their own rules/policies about letting people into their store without a face covering. Please check with individual stores.

How can I go shopping if I am exempt from wearing a mask but a store denies me entry?

If you are unable to wear a face covering for medical or behavioral reasons (ex. asthma, COPD, claustrophobia, autism, etc.), designate someone else in your household as the "errand runner." If this is not possible and you have to go out, try to maintain physical distance from others as much as possible. Check the individual store's policy. For people who are not able to wear a face covering, businesses are encouraged to make curbside service available to them.