

CLOTH FACE COVERINGS IN SCHOOLS

What Families Need to Know

A cloth face covering covers the nose and mouth and is secured to the head with ties, straps, or ear loops. We know that families have a lot of questions on the who, what, why, and how behind cloth face coverings. This document provides some answers, and the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (**CDC**) and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (**DHS**) offer additional information on their websites.

Why should we wear cloth face coverings?

We know cloth face coverings can help stop the spread of COVID-19. This is because COVID-19 is spread through respiratory droplets when someone speaks, coughs, or sneezes, and cloth face coverings create a barrier for those droplets. This reduces the chance that you will spread the disease to others if you are sick and do not realize it. Wearing a cloth face covering is an important step in protecting each other from COVID-19; my mask protects you, and your mask protects me.



Who should wear cloth face coverings?



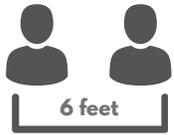
Adults and children who are able to safely wear (and remove) cloth face coverings must wear one while inside a school building. Schools will work to ensure that any policy aligns with state and local rules and recommendations. However, there are valid concerns that may prevent someone from wearing a cloth face covering safely. For example, cloth face coverings should NOT be worn by children under the age of 2. Other concerns include:

- Anyone who has trouble breathing.
- Anyone who is unable to remove the covering without assistance. This includes someone who is unconscious or incapacitated.
- Anyone with health considerations, including respiratory conditions, autism spectrum disorder, or past traumatic experiences, that prevent them from feeling safe while wearing a covering.
- Anyone with an intellectual or developmental disability that prevents from them from safely wearing a covering.

How do we wear cloth face coverings most effectively?

A cloth face covering should cover the nose and mouth, fit snugly on the face, and be secured in place via ear loops or strings that tie behind the head. Try to avoid touching the cloth face covering, especially if you haven't washed your hands recently. If it gets dirty, change it as soon as possible. Do not wear the same covering for more than one day without cleaning, and wash your covering after each day's use.

To keep your skin healthy when wearing a cloth face covering regularly, be sure to wash your face often, especially before and after using the covering. Applying moisturizer can help decrease friction and reduce irritation.



Cloth face coverings are most effective when combined with frequent hand washing, physical distancing (staying 6 feet apart from others), and avoiding being around people who are sick.

How do we care for cloth face coverings?

One way to keep track of clean and dirty face masks would be to keep cloth face coverings in a designated bag or bin until they can be washed with hot water and dried on a hot cycle. If you are unable to machine wash the covering, you can wash it by hand with hot water and laundry detergent or a bleach solution before air drying it. If you are using a bleach solution, follow these steps with 5.25%-8.25% bleach:



- Prepare the bleach solution in one of the following two ways:
 - 4 teaspoons of bleach + 1 quart of room temperature water
 - 5 tablespoons (1/3 cup) of bleach + 1 gallon of room temperature water
- Soak the cloth face covering in the bleach solution for 5 minutes.
- Rinse the covering thoroughly with cool or room temperature water.
- Discard the bleach solution down the drain.

Whether you are washing by hand with detergent or bleach solution, or if you are machine washing, it's best to dry the mask completely before wearing.

Can we use face shields instead of cloth face coverings?

A face shield is not substitute for a cloth face covering except in certain special circumstances. Because shields do not fit tightly around the mouth and nose, there is not enough evidence to show that they are effective in preventing the transmission of COVID-19, and the CDC does not recommend using them. However, there are some situations where it is not possible to wear a cloth face covering and a face shield may be the best alternative. For example, some people rely on lip reading, and to assist with this, cloth face coverings with clear plastic panels are recommended. If one is not available, the cloth face covering could be temporarily replaced with a clear face shield.



Why do we need to talk as a family about how some people may not be able to wear cloth face coverings?

Wearing cloth face coverings is a key way we can all help stop the spread of COVID-19, and it is also the case that not everyone can wear one safely. Talking as a family about the importance of wearing a cloth face covering if you can do it safely can be an opportunity to discuss protecting others who can't wear one. Because the reasons people may not be able to safely wear a cloth face covering are complicated – trauma, health conditions, disabilities, racism – these discussions can be difficult, and we recognize that. We recommend having these conversations because we think it's important for kids to understand that it is not up to them to enforce wearing a cloth face covering. Instead, we want to reinforce that it is important for them to do their part to help everyone in our communities by wearing one themselves.



RESOURCES

CDC Recommendations on Cloth Face Covers

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html

DHS Information on Cloth Face Covers

www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/protect.htm