



## **Wearing a Face Covering at Work**

### Employee Guidance FAQs

Revised 12/1/20

#### **Q.1. Am I required to wear a face covering at work?**

Yes, unless you are covered by the health exemption. The California Department of Public Health (“CDPH”) November 16, 2020 [“Guidance for the Use of Face Coverings”](#) (“Guidance”) mandates that a face covering is required at all times when outside of the home, with limited exceptions.

#### **Q.2. Am I required to wear a face covering when I am alone inside my enclosed office?**

A face covering is not required when an employee is alone in their personal office (a single room) with the door closed, as long as the public does not regularly visit the room. A face covering is required at all other times, including when anyone else enters the personal office, and in all other work areas, including hallways, elevators, restrooms, conference rooms, shared offices, and all other shared spaces. Additionally, a cubicle or workstation does not fall within the personal office exemption.

#### **Q.3. My understanding was that we were not required to wear a face covering if we worked in an open work area but inside a workstation/cubicle with high partitions, but now we are. Is this correct, and what changed?**

Yes, a face covering is now required at all times while a person is at their workstation/cubicle in an area with an open floor plan (regardless of the height of the workstation/cubicle partitions), with limited exceptions discussed in more detail in the FAQs below (e.g. medical exemptions, while actively eating/drinking). Under the updated Guidance, employees are not permitted to remove their mask while alone in their workstation/cubicle. Public health officials continue to learn more about COVID-19 and share that knowledge with our community. Because individuals may be contagious and spread COVID-19 without their knowledge, even if they do not have symptoms, the Guidance mandates wearing face coverings when outside of the house, except under specific settings.

#### **Q.4. How long is this Guidance in place?**

Right now, there is no end date. This Guidance is in place until it is extended, rescinded, superseded, or amended in writing by the CDPH.

#### **Q.5. I have health-related concerns with wearing a face covering. Am I still required to wear one?**

The Guidance contains limited face covering exceptions, including for those with certain conditions or disabilities. Specifically, a face covering is not required for persons with a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that prevents wearing a face

covering. This includes persons with a medical condition for whom wearing a face covering could obstruct breathing or who are unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without assistance. Such conditions are rare.

Additionally, the Guidance also provides a limited exception for persons who are hearing impaired, or communicating with a person who is hearing impaired, where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication.

The Guidance provides that persons exempted from wearing a face covering due to a medical condition who are employed in a job involving regular contact with others must wear a non-restrictive alternative, such as a face shield with a drape on the bottom edge, as long as their condition permits it.

**Q.6. Is there guidance describing how to properly wear or make cloth face coverings?**

Yes. All employees must follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) guidelines regarding how to properly wear a face covering. The link below is a great resource that includes how to properly wear, make, store and wash face coverings.

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

**Q.7. Is there guidance describing how to properly care for cloth face coverings?**

As noted in the Guidance, employees should wash cloth face covering frequently, ideally after each use, or at least daily. Have a bag or bin to keep cloth face coverings in until they can be laundered with detergent and hot water and dried on a hot cycle. If you must re-wear your cloth face covering before washing, wash your hands immediately after putting it back on and avoid touching your face.

Discard cloth face coverings that:

- No longer cover the nose and mouth
- Have stretched out or damaged ties or straps
- Cannot stay on the face
- Have holes or tears in the fabric

For additional information and resources regarding face coverings, including types of recommended and not recommended, see the CDC Face Coverings Website.

**Q.8. Do I need to provide documentation and to whom do I present the documentation to be exempt from the Guidance requiring the wearing of a face covering?**

Yes. Employees unable to wear a face covering due to a medical or mental health condition or disability must provide documentation from their medical provider. Documentation from a medical provider should be provided to your immediate supervisor.

**Q.9. Will I be required to go home if I report to work without a face covering?**

The Guidance mandates that “a face covering is required at all times when outside of the

home...” You will be required to wear a face covering in order to enter the County facility where you work.

**Q.10. Are members of the public required to wear a face covering?**

Yes. Per the Guidance, members of the public are required to wear a face covering while inside of or waiting in line to enter the business, facility, or location, including government offices.

**Q.11. If I wear a face covering may I discontinue the existing requirements of frequent hand washing and maintaining social distancing of 6-feet?**

No. Wearing a face covering is one tool for reducing the spread of the virus but doing so is not a substitute for hand-washing and social distancing. All three practices must continue.

**Q.12. I have a face covering that covers my entire face. May I wear that to work?**

No. A covering that hides or obscures the wearer’s eyes or forehead is NOT an acceptable face covering, nor is a mask with a valve or other opening that allows breath to pass outside the mask.

**Q.13. Am I required to wear a face covering when I am alone in my car driving to work?**

No. This Guidance does not require any person to wear a face covering while driving alone, or exclusively with other members of your household. However, the Guidance does require the wearing of a face covering while in a taxi, private car service, or ride-sharing vehicle.

**Q.14. Is there a penalty for not complying with this Guidance?**

Yes. Failure to comply with the state’s Guidance constitutes an imminent threat and immediate menace to public health, constitutes a public nuisance, and is punishable by fine, imprisonment, or both.

**Q.15. Am I required to wear a face covering while in the common lunch/break room if I am by myself (*not eating my lunch*)?**

Yes. Other persons may enter the room when you leave, and it is important to continue to adhere to the Guidance mandate to wear a face covering at all times when outside of the home.

**Q.16. Am I required to wear a face covering if I am *eating my lunch* in the common lunchroom or at my cubicle/workstation?**

No. While you are actively drinking or eating, you are not required to wear a face covering provided you are able to maintain a distance of at least six feet. However, if another person enters the lunchroom, you must adhere to the social-distancing guidelines by sitting at least 6-feet apart. If you are eating at your desk/cubicle in an open floor plan, you are not required to wear a face covering while you are actively drinking or eating, provided that you can maintain 6 feet of distance from others while doing so. Similarly to eating in the lunch

room, if another person comes near your desk/cubicle, you must adhere to the social-distancing guidelines and request that the person who approached your desk/cubicle adhere to the social-distancing guidelines by remaining at least 6-feet apart.

**Disclaimer**

*The answers provided are based on current information and are subject to change. This includes changes, due to revisions of federal, state, or local law, regulation and/or regulatory agency guidance. Please be sure to check with your Agency/Department Human Resources Office for the latest information.*