Be sure to bring a mask with you when you leave home.

The Health Department currently recommends wearing a mask when you are in public indoor settings, because a significant portion of the population remains unvaccinated and the more transmissible Delta variant is spreading.

Wearing a mask helps protect you and the people around you from getting or spreading COVID-19. A mask helps contain your respiratory droplets and can keep them from reaching other people. COVID-19 can spread even if a person does not have any symptoms. If you are fully vaccinated, it is still possible to get and transmit the virus.

You may be required to wear a mask in some settings, even if you are fully vaccinated. For now, everyone is still required to wear a mask in health care settings, long-term care facilities and on public transportation (including school buses), even if you are fully vaccinated.

For schools, child care and out-of-school programs, the Health Department recommends that unvaccinated people 2 years and older wear masks when inside.

If you're gathering with people indoors and are not fully vaccinated, wearing a mask and staying 6 feet apart helps protect anyone who is unvaccinated, at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19, or lives with someone who is at increased risk.

Here are some tips to help you make sure you always have a mask with you: store your masks with your keys, phone or wallet so they're easier to remember, or keep an extra in your coat pocket, bag or car just in case.

Types of Masks

There are several types of masks to choose from, including cloth, disposable, N95 and KN95. If you choose to wear a gaiter as a face covering, fold it over so it is two layers.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has found that "double masking" or wearing two masks (disposable mask underneath and a cloth mask on top) can offer a better fit and provide extra protection.

Whichever mask you choose, **it is important to make sure it fits properly**. Learn more from the CDC about improving how your mask protects you.

If you have trouble breathing or work in a setting where it is difficult to wear a mask, you can wear a lightweight bandana or cloth covering tied to be open at the bottom instead of a mask. Face shields are typically used in health care settings and are mainly meant for eye protection.

How to Wear Your Mask Correctly

A mask must be worn properly to be effective and avoid spreading COVID-19:

- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer before putting it on.
- Put it over your nose and mouth and secure it under your chin.
- Make sure it fits snugly against the side of your face.
- Slip the loops over your ears or tie the strings behind your head.
- Do not touch it when you are wearing it.
- Remove it by handling only the ear loops or ties and fold the outside corners together.
- Be careful not to touch your eyes, nose or mouth, then wash your hands immediately after removing it.
- If you wear glasses, find a mask that fits closely over your nose or has a nose wire to help reduce fogging.

How to Wash Your Mask

Wash your cloth mask whenever it gets dirty or at least daily in a washing machine or by hand. If you have a disposable mask, throw it away after wearing it once.

- Include your mask with your regular laundry.
- Use regular laundry detergent and the warmest appropriate water setting for the cloth used to make the mask.
- Use the highest heat setting and leave it in the dryer until it's completely dry.
- Have a few on hand so you can rotate them for washing and have enough clean ones ready to wear.

What to do During Hot or Cold Weather

During hot weather, if you feel like you are overheating and are having trouble breathing because it is hot, take off your mask, drink water, rest and seek shade or a cool place.

During cold weather, change your mask when it becomes wet. Keep a spare mask to replace the wet one, and put the wet one in a plastic bag until you get home. If you need to wear a scarf, ski mask or balaclava, wear it over your mask.

For more information:

- [CDC's Guide to Masks](#)