

Face Coverings in Schools, Childcare, and Early Learning Programs

Q. What is new?

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH), Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) have published guidance that requires staff and children to wear a face covering while in school or child care. The DOH order requires all people in Washington to wear a face covering indoors and outdoors whenever they cannot stay 6 feet apart from people they don't live with.

All staff and children ages 5 years and older must wear a face covering. Children ages 2-4 are strongly encouraged to wear a face covering. Some individuals cannot or should not wear a face covering. This may be due to their age (under 2 years), a disability or personal health issue, or being told by a health professional not to wear one. Children or staff may use face shields in some circumstances, but they [may not provide the same level of protection](#) as face coverings.

Q. Why is this happening now rather than earlier in the pandemic?



[Emerging science](#) indicates that face coverings work best at preventing the spread of COVID-19 when *everyone* wears one when they can't stay 6 feet apart from people they do not live with. This includes children and people who feel healthy.

Q. How can childcare providers and teachers help children with this requirement?

Teachers and childcare providers can:

- Role model how to put on, wear, and remove face coverings correctly
- Offer praise for wearing face coverings
- Gently correct misuse using words or signs
- Remind students not to touch their or their classmates' faces or face coverings
- Share the good things that face coverings do!



DOH offers [tips to help kids wear face coverings](#) as does [Public Health—Seattle & King County](#).

Q. Are there reasons why children should not wear a face covering?

Yes. Children do not need to wear a face covering if:

- They are under 2 years old (it increases the risk for suffocation).
- A medical provider has told them that they should not wear a face covering because of personal health issues.
- They have a disability that makes it hard for them to wear or remove a face covering.
- They are deaf or hard of hearing and use facial and mouth movements as part of communication.
- They cannot take off the face covering without help.

Q. Are there times during the day when children can remove a face covering?

Yes. Children can remove a face covering when they are:

- Playing outside.
- Sleeping.
- Eating or drinking.

Q. What is the correct way to put on and wear a face covering?

Step 1. Wash hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer BEFORE putting on face covering.



Step 2. Avoid touching the front of the face covering when putting it on.

Step 3. Ensure a proper fit.



Tighten the loops or ties so it's snug around your face, without gaps.



Mask should cover from just under the bridge of your nose to under your chin.

DON'T: Wear the mask below your nose.



DON'T: Wear your mask loosely with gaps on the sides.



DON'T: Push your mask under your chin to rest on your neck.



DON'T: Leave your chin exposed.



DON'T: Wear your mask so it covers just the tip of your nose.



DON'T: Wear a vented mask. It doesn't protect others from germs.



Step 4. When taking off face covering, use elastic ties or loops. Avoid touching the front of mask.

Step 5. Wash hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer AFTER taking off face covering.



Any other tips?

- For safety, children must be able to remove face coverings on their own. Face coverings with elastic straps instead of ties can make this easier.
- Have extra face coverings for children in case one becomes contaminated or handled incorrectly (i.e. by another child).
- Store face coverings in individual bags or containers when not in use (i.e. mealtime).
- Label face coverings with the child's first and last name to avoid mix-ups.
- Teachers and childcare providers should wash hands before and after helping a child with their face covering.
- For instructions on how to make a deaf-friendly face covering with a clear window that provides visual access for communication, see the Hearing, Speech and Deaf Center's [step-by-step guide](#).
- Everyone should wash their face coverings daily with soap and water or in a washing machine. Let them dry completely before reusing.



or



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