



Notification to use Fabric Face Coverings in Public Settings

April 6, 2020 Directives

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continues to study the spread and effects of the novel coronavirus across the United States. CDC now knows from recent studies that a significant portion of individuals with coronavirus **lack symptoms (“asymptomatic”) and that even those who eventually develop symptoms (“pre-symptomatic”) can transmit the virus to others before showing symptoms.** This means that the virus can spread between people interacting in close proximity—for example, speaking, coughing, or sneezing—even if those people are not exhibiting symptoms. In light of this new evidence, CDC recommends wearing fabric face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies) **especially** in areas of significant community-based transmission. Our community owes it to the people who continue to work in Critical Infrastructure and Essential Businesses, to protect them by adhering to these practices.

It is critical to emphasize that staying home is the best way to help reduce the spread of the virus, but if you must go out, wearing a fabric face mask is recommended. It is not a substitute for maintaining 6-foot social distancing and hand washing as these remain important steps to slowing the spread of the virus. CDC is additionally advising the use of simple cloth face coverings to slow the spread of the virus and help people who may have the virus and do not know it from transmitting it to others. Fabric face coverings fashioned from household items or made at home from common materials at low cost can be used as an additional public health measure.

The fabric face coverings recommended are not surgical masks or N-95 respirators. Surgical masks and N-95 respirators are critical supplies that must continue to be reserved for healthcare workers and other medical first responders, as recommended by current CDC guidance.

The public in general and Critical Infrastructure/Essential Business employees should adhere to the following:

- All persons over the age of two should wear some form of covering over their nose and mouth, such as a homemade mask, scarf, bandana or handkerchief, when:
 - (1) entering into or inside of any building open to the public,
 - (2) when using public transportation, taxis, or ride shares, and
 - (3) when pumping gas.

This section shall not apply to persons that are:

- (1) engaging in a permissible outside physical activity,
 - (2) riding in a personal vehicle,
 - (3) that are alone in a separate single space,
 - (4) are in the presence of their own shelter group (household members),
 - (5) when doing so poses a greater health, safety or security risk such as anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cover without assistance, or
 - (6) when eating.
- All COVID-19 Positive Individuals, Suspected Positives, those currently being tested, and Untested Individuals with cough and/or fever, and household members of same category of individuals shall not leave their residence.
 - All individuals working for a business defined as a Critical Infrastructure in the Travis County Stay Home Order, 2020-5, should wear a mask or cloth face covering whenever in public and whenever performing job duties in the presence of others.
 - Medical grade (N95) and surgical masks shall be reserved and used only by medical professionals and first responders.

Examples of how to make cloth face coverings can be found online including [guidance](#) from the CDC and [guidance](#) from Austin/ Travis County Health Authority.

The fabric face covering should-

- Fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face
- be secured with ties or ear loops
- include multiple layers of fabric
- allow for breathing without restriction
- be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape
- Even with the use of appropriate face coverings, individuals shall maintain 6 feet of social distancing whenever possible
- Individuals should avoid touching their face and should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer
- For further information, individual can access information at www.AustinTexas.gov/COVID19.