

POLICY: Who Should Not Wear a Face Mask & When to use a Face Shield

Masks should **not** be worn by:

- Children younger than 2 years old
- Anyone who has trouble breathing
- Anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance

Feasibility and Adaptations

CDC recognizes that wearing masks may not be possible in every situation or for some people. In some situations, wearing a mask may exacerbate a physical or mental health condition, lead to a medical emergency, or introduce significant safety concerns. Adaptations and alternatives should be considered whenever possible to increase the feasibility of wearing a mask or to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading if it is not possible to wear one.

For example,

- People who are deaf or hard of hearing—or those who care for or interact with a person who is hearing impaired—may be unable to wear masks if they rely on lipreading to communicate. In this situation, consider using a clear mask. If a clear mask isn't available, consider whether you can use written communication, use closed captioning, or decrease background noise to make communication possible while wearing a mask that blocks your lips.
- Some people, such as people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental health conditions or other sensory sensitivities, may have challenges wearing a mask. They should consult with their healthcare provider for advice about wearing masks.
- Younger children (e.g., preschool or early elementary aged) may be unable to wear a mask properly, particularly for an extended period of time. Wearing of masks may be prioritized at times when it is difficult to maintain a distance of 6 feet from others (e.g., during carpool drop off or

pick up, or when standing in line at school). Ensuring proper mask size and fit and providing children with frequent reminders and education on the importance and proper wear of masks may help address these issues.

- People should not wear masks while engaged in activities that may cause the mask to become wet, like when [swimming at the beach or pool](#). A wet mask may make it difficult to breathe. For activities like swimming, it is particularly important to maintain physical distance from others when in the water.
- People who are engaged in high intensity activities, like running, may not be able to wear a mask if it causes difficulty breathing. If unable to wear a mask, consider conducting the activity in a location with greater ventilation and air exchange (for instance, outdoors versus indoors) and where it is possible to maintain physical distance from others.
- People who work in a setting where masks may increase the risk of [heat-related illness](#) or cause safety concerns due to introduction of a hazard (for instance, straps getting caught in machinery) may consult with an occupational safety and health professional to determine the appropriate mask for their setting. Outdoor workers may prioritize use of masks when in close contact with other people, like during group travel or shift meetings, and remove masks when social distancing is possible.

Masks are a critical preventive measure and are **most** essential in times when social distancing is difficult. If masks cannot be used, make sure to take other measures to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread, including social distancing, frequent hand washing, and cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces.

Face Shields

- A face shield is primarily used for eye protection for the person wearing it. At this time, it is not known what level of protection a face shield provides to people nearby from the spray of respiratory droplets from the wearer. There is currently not enough evidence to support the effectiveness of face shields for source control. Therefore, CDC **does not currently recommend** use of face shields as a substitute for masks.

- However, wearing a mask may not be feasible in every situation for some people for example, people who are deaf or hard of hearing—or those who care for or interact with a person who is hearing impaired. Here are some considerations for individuals who must wear a face shield instead of a mask:
 - Although evidence on face shields is limited, the available data suggest that the following face shields may provide better source control than others:
 - Face shields that wrap around the sides of the wearer’s face and extend below the chin.
 - Hooded face shields.
 - Face shield wearers should wash their hands before and after removing the face shield and avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth when removing it.
 - Disposable face shields should only be worn for a single use and disposed of according to manufacturer instructions.
 - Reusable face shields should be cleaned and disinfected after each use according to manufacturer instructions or by following [CDC face shield cleaning instructions](#).
 - **Plastic face shields for newborns and infants are NOT recommended.**