

Face Covering Executive Order FAQs

Updated: November 6, 2020

**Please note this FAQ document may be updated to answer additional questions in the future.*

(1) Why is wearing a face covering important?

COVID-19 is an airborne virus that most commonly spreads between people who are in close contact with one another. It spreads through respiratory droplets or small particles, such as those in aerosols, produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, sings, talks, or breathes. Wearing a face covering has been proven to be one of the most significant, effective, and easiest ways to reduce the spread of COVID-19 because it helps contain respiratory droplets.

(2) Does the medical exemption to wearing a face covering still apply?

Yes. Nothing in the executive order changes whether an individual is exempt from the face covering requirement; they are listed in [Executive Order 14 FY 20/21](#). Instead of changing *who* should wear face coverings, the new order clarifies *where* and *when* people should wear them.

(3) If I am walking or running on the sidewalk with no one in my immediate vicinity, do I still need to wear a face covering?

If you are in a public setting, you should wear a face covering. Of course, common sense will come into play, but, if you are asking yourself whether you should wear a face covering, the answer is most likely yes. We are confident that Maine people will exercise good judgment and will do their best to honor this requirement because wearing a face covering will save lives, keep our economy moving, and keep schools and businesses open.

(3) Am I supposed to wear a face covering when out hiking and there's no one around?

Hiking trails are not within the definition of “public setting” under the Executive Order, so the requirement would not apply. However, as mentioned above, if you are asking yourself whether you should wear a face covering, the answer is most likely yes. We are confident Maine people will exercise good judgment.

(4) Do people in gyms, including yoga classes, now have to wear a face covering?

Yes.

(5) If I am exercising on my own or with my family – not in a public setting or in organized sports – do I have to wear a face covering?

No. The purpose of the policy is to protect you from others, and others from you.

(6) How about skiers?

Generally, yes. Skiers often wear buffs and gaiters which are an acceptable substitute for masks as long as they provide two-ply coverage. Wearing a face covering is required when skiing as part of an organized event or competition. For example, even with staggered starts, the nature of Nordic skiing with unexpected trail events and differences between athletes often results in bunched up groups later in the race. That said, when skiing on your own in a non-public setting a face covering is not required.

(7) What about during school or community sports like high school basketball or a private hockey league?

Based on experience in different states, Maine now requires participants in sports activities organized by K-12 schools, or by leagues and communities, to wear face coverings. This is to protect all people involved. Collegiate sports and professional sports organizations may follow their own guidance.

(8) Do people have to wear face coverings during outdoor photo shoots?

Yes, if they are taking place in a public setting.

(9) Are all attending religious services required to wear a face covering, including the person leading the service, even if he or she is 14 feet away from other participants?

Yes, for the safety of all involved.

(10) Do people sitting six feet apart in a movie theater or live performance have to wear a face covering? What about actors?

Yes. The audience, performers, and staff must wear face coverings since these are public settings. Live entertainment guidance is in the [Performing Arts Venues COVID-19 Prevention Checklist](#).

(11) Does this new face covering requirement apply in restaurants?

Yes. To reduce the risk of COVID-19 to other patrons and restaurant employees, patrons are required to wear face coverings whenever they are not seated at the table or eating or drinking.

(12) Does this apply to private workplaces?

Private employers whose staff do not interact with the public may determine the persons who should wear a face covering at their workplace. However, when people are in shared or public spaces in a workplace, they need to wear a face covering.

(13) Are business owners and people who operate indoor public spaces required to enforce the face covering orders?

The November 4, 2020, Executive Order (16 FY 20/21) does not change who enforces whether people are wearing face coverings.

Large retail businesses as well as schools, municipal buildings, and certain other types of organizations, are already responsible for implementing measures to ensure customers wear face coverings.

Now, owners and operators of all indoor public settings in Maine must post plainly visible signs notifying entrants of the requirement to wear cloth face coverings. The Administration recognizes that for some stores, particularly small stores with few employees, a requirement to enforce the Executive Order could be difficult, which is why they may deny service or entry for non-compliance. Additionally, those who are made aware of the face covering requirement and insist on entering an establishment may be refused service and/or charged with trespassing.

(14) What will enforcement of this new order look like?

The State places a high priority on voluntary compliance and is encouraged by Maine people and businesses who are taking the very real threat of the virus seriously by following the State's health and safety protocols. In the event of non-compliance, the State has the option of taking action against a facility's operating license and violations of Executive Orders are a Class E crime, punishable by up to 180 days imprisonment and \$1,000 fine. As noted above, people who are made aware of the face covering requirement and insist on entering an establishment may be refused service and/or charged with trespassing.