



Mask wearing continues to be the single most effective strategy for minimizing the spread of COVID-19 from an infected person to others, while allowing us to continue to work, study, and play safely. Other strategies include staying at least six feet away from others, avoiding contact with people who are sick, washing hands often, and staying home when sick.

How do masks work?

The virus which causes COVID-19 is thought to be mostly spread by respiratory droplets released when people talk, cough, or sneeze. Wearing a mask stops these droplets from spreading to others. This is extra important because around 40-50 percent of people with COVID-19 do not have symptoms but can still spread the virus. Wearing a mask does not mean people who are sick should be in public. Stay home if you are sick unless you need to seek medical care.

Who should and shouldn't wear a mask?

Everyone who can wear a mask should wear one. Even if you've had COVID-19, you should still wear a mask because we do not know how often people who have been sick with COVID-19 will get it again.

Masks should not be put on children under age 2 or on anyone who has trouble breathing, is unconscious, or unable to remove the mask without help. In addition, people with disabilities or special health needs may not be able to wear a mask. In these circumstances, accommodations can be made for safe alternatives such as physical distancing. Adaptations and alternatives should also be considered for students who are very young or are deaf or hard of hearing (e.g. using clear masks when interacting).

When should masks be worn?

Masks should be worn in the classrooms, hallways, in carpools, on school buses, and other areas where physical distancing of at least six feet cannot be maintained. It is also important to know and follow your school's policies on mask wearing.

How do students safely take off and put on their mask at allowed “mask breaks”?

Take off

1. Make sure students are at least six feet away from one another during the break.
2. Remove mask using the following procedure:
 - Wash hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer.
 - Avoid touching the front of the mask.
 - After it is removed, the mask should be carefully folded in half with the inside of the mask touching.
 - Place the mask in a labeled paper bag, on a peg, or on a clean paper towel (if the mask is not folded, the inside of the mask should face up).
 - Wash hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer

Put on

1. Wash hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer.
2. Put on the mask using the following procedure:
 - Remove mask from paper bag or paper towel using the ear loops or ties; try not to touch the outside (front) of the mask.
 - Make sure that the mask covers your nose, mouth, and chin.
 - Wash hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer.

How do I clean my mask?

Masks should be washed (either by machine or by hand) before wearing again at school the next day. If by machine, masks can be washed with the rest of the laundry and dried in either direct sunlight or on high heat in the dryer. If by hand, use detergent or a bleach solution (1/3 cup bleach per gallon of water) and warm water and let soak for several minutes before rinsing.

Having enough masks for each day of the week will ensure that students can continuously have a clean mask on hand while laundering their used masks.

Additional Resources

Idaho Back to School Framework

<https://www.sde.idaho.gov/re-opening/files/Idaho-Back-to-School-Framework-2020.pdf>

Guidance for K-12 School Administrators on the Use of Masks in Schools

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/cloth-face-cover.html>

Considerations for Wearing Masks

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html>