

Mask Ordinance FAQ

When does the mask ordinance go into effect?

This ordinance goes into effect at 5:00 p.m. on Friday, July 10.

When will the mask ordinance expire?

This ordinance is in effect for 90 days and will expire at 5 p.m. on October 8 unless extended, rescinded, superseded or amended.

How will this ordinance be enforced?

Education will be the first step in enforcement. We will work to educate any violators of the ordinance before pursuing further action. PHHS will work in conjunction with the Office of Neighborhood Services (ONS) to address any complaints reported. Failure to comply with this ordinance can result in a \$15 fee for individuals, or \$100 fee for business, government or non-profit entities. Each individual within or working for the entity is considered a separate violation.

How can violations be reported?

Violations of the mask ordinance can be reported by emailing city@como.gov or by calling 573.874.CITY. If a customer at a business refuses to wear a mask and is causing immediate danger to the businesses' staff, please call 911.

What defines a mask?

A mask is defined as a covering made of cloth, fabric, or other soft or permeable material, without holes, that covers only the nose and mouth and surrounding areas of the lower face. Masks may be factory-made, or handmade and improvised from ordinary household materials. Household items such as bandanas, towels, t-shirts or any other cotton or linen fabric can be used to make a mask. If choosing to wear a cloth mask, it is recommended that they be made with at least 2 layers of fabric.

Does everyone have to wear a mask?

Under this ordinance, everyone 10 years old and above that is within Columbia city limits will be required to wear a mask when around people who are not household members. There are exemptions for people who have a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that prevents wearing a mask. Exemptions are also made for people who are hearing impaired and people communicating with individuals who are hearing impaired. For more situations in which you should and should not wear a face mask, please refer to the questions below.

What are some examples of when to wear a face mask? Please note these are just a few examples and not a comprehensive list.

- When shopping at the grocery store or other retail establishment.
- When sitting in the stands close to others while watching a sporting event.
- When walking around your office/place of work when others are present.

- When riding in a vehicle with someone who is not a member(s) of your household (i.e. when riding the city bus, when driving in a work vehicle with other employees, etc.)
- When standing in line at the store or other event.
- Anytime you are around or interact with someone who you do not live with.

When should I not wear a face mask?

There are several exempted activities listed in this ordinance. Those include:

- While outdoors when able to maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from others.
- While exercising outdoors or when exercising indoors and able to maintain a 6 foot distance.
- When playing a sport or sporting activity as authorized by [the existing Health Order](#).
- When at home with only members of your household.
- When in your car/vehicle.
- When actively eating or drinking, or while seated and adequately spaced from others at a food establishment (see below for more detail).
- When getting a service that requires the temporary removal of a mask, such as during a dental exam, facial, makeup application, etc.
- When the removal of the mask is necessary to confirm identity.
- When federal or state law prohibits wearing a mask or requires the removal of a mask, such as when going through TSA at the airport.
- When requested by a law enforcement officer, medical provider or emergency response personnel.
- When at your place of work, safely distanced from other people for example, in your office.

Do I need a doctor's note to prove I have a medical condition that prevents me from wearing a mask?

No. You do not need a doctor's note or documentation proving you have a medical condition preventing you from wearing a mask. However, you may be required to provide certification to your employer.

Do I need to wear one in the gym?

If you are engaged in physical activity in the gym and are distanced from others, you do not need to wear one. If you are not engaged in physical activity, or are not able to remain at least 6 feet away from others, then one must be worn in a gym.

Do I need to wear one at a restaurant or bar?

Masks should be worn in restaurants and bars as you wait to be seated and while you walk to your table in the dining area. Once seated, you can remove your face mask if you are safely distanced from others. The mask should be put on anytime you leave the table.

Do I need to wear a mask at the pool?

Masks should not be worn while swimming. Masks should be worn when in and around the pool area when social distancing from others is not possible to maintain. This may be when entering and exiting the pool facility, or when visiting the locker room or restroom areas.

Do I need to wear a mask when playing golf?

Masks should be worn while golfing anytime that social distancing is not possible to maintain.

There is an exemption for wearing a mask during a sporting activity. Does that include coaches, umpires or other volunteers on the field/court/etc.?

Players engaged in the sporting activity are exempt from the mask requirement while they are physically active in the sport. This exemption does not apply to players on the sidelines/bench/dugout, coaches, or referees/umpires who are not engaged in physical activity.

Are child care providers required to wear a mask?

Yes, child care providers are required to wear a mask. This includes in-home providers.

Where can I get a mask if I do not have one?

Both reusable and cloth face masks can be purchased at many different locations around the city including grocery stores, retail establishments, or online retailers. There are also many local cloth mask makers in and around Columbia that you can find via Facebook marketplace or other buying and selling groups.

If you are unable to purchase a mask, there are free, reusable masks available at several organizations around town, including PHHS, the Food Bank Central Pantry, and Voluntary Action Center.

What should I look for when buying a mask?

Look for masks made with at least 2 layers of fabric. It should cover your nose and mouth without large gaps. The mask should have ear loops or ties so you can adjust it. For people who wear glasses, look for a mask with a bendable border at the top so you can mold the mask to fit the bridge of your nose and prevent your glasses from fogging.

I am an employer. Where can I get masks for my employees?

Employers can order facemasks through any supplier. One option is the Missouri PPE marketplace located on the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services website:

[PPE Resource Process and Requests | COVID-19 Outbreak | Health & Senior Services.](#)

How long can I wear a disposable mask?

Disposable masks can be reused multiple times until they are damaged or soiled. You can clean disposable masks before reuse by spraying with an alcohol solution and allowing to dry completely before wearing again. It is important to always [remove face coverings correctly](#) and [wash your hands](#) after handling or touching a used face covering.

How can I wash my cloth face mask and how often should I clean it?

Cloth face coverings should be washed at least once a day. It is important to always [remove face coverings correctly](#) and [wash your hands](#) after handling or touching a used face covering. The CDC has more information on how to wash a cloth face mask: [How to Wash a Cloth Face Covering](#).

What are some tips for making a cloth face mask?

Bandanas, scarves, hand towels, or any items made of cotton or linen can easily be used as a face covering, as many have these items at home. The CDC has more information on how to make cloth face coverings at home. Instructions are included for sewn and non-sewn masks: [How to Make Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow Spread](#).

How do you properly wear a face mask?

Your mask should cover your face from the bridge of your nose to under your chin. It should be loose fitting but still secure enough to stay in place. Make sure you can talk with your mask on and that it doesn't irritate you, so you are not tempted to touch it or pull it out of place, which could put you at risk from touching your face or limit its effectiveness.

What is the science behind the effectiveness of mask wearing?

The recommendation from the CDC to wear a cloth face covering during the COVID-19 pandemic is based on what we know about the role respiratory droplets play in the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19, paired with [emerging evidence](#) from clinical and laboratory studies that shows cloth face coverings reduce the spray of droplets when worn over the nose and mouth.

How do masks prevent the spread of COVID-19?

According to the CDC, cloth face coverings are recommended as a simple barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from traveling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the cloth face covering coughs, sneezes, talks, or raises their voice. This is called source control. COVID-19 spreads mainly among people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet), so the use of cloth face coverings is particularly important in settings where people are close to each other or where social distancing is difficult to maintain.

Why are masks being encouraged now when they weren't before?

COVID-19 is a new virus and we learn new things about it everyday. As we learn more about the virus, we now have more evidence to suggest that face masks could slow the spread of the virus. We will continue to adapt our recommendations as we discover more about the novel Coronavirus.

Can I wear a face shield instead of a mask?

The CDC does not recommend use of face shields for normal everyday activities or as a substitute for cloth face coverings.

Do I have to wear a face mask in my own home?

A face mask is not necessary when in your own home and only with members of your household. If you are hosting a gathering with people from other households, everyone should wear a face mask in order to protect each other from possible exposure to the virus. If you live in a multi-family unit, such as an apartment building, wear a face mask in communal spaces, such as the laundry room and shared hallways.

Can wearing a mask make me sick?

Masks may be uncomfortable or difficult to get used to, but there is no sufficient evidence suggesting that wearing a mask can make a healthy individual sick. Both surgical and cloth masks are porous, allowing for normal breathing. According to the CDC, it is unlikely that wearing a mask will cause a buildup of CO₂.

If I wear a mask do I still have to social distance?

Yes, social distancing should always be practiced and masks are not a substitute for social distancing. Masks act as an additional layer of protection in slowing the spread of the virus.

I am a business owner/manager. How do I notify customers of this ordinance?

It is recommended that businesses place signs on entrances to notify customers/visitors of the mask requirement. [PHHS has created signs](#) that all businesses can print and place on their doors, or businesses can create their own signage.

Does this ordinance supersede the current [Public Health Order](#)?

No, this ordinance does not supersede the current Public Health Order. This ordinance acts as an additional requirement to the public health order. For example, all personal care service providers and clients are still required to wear a mask, in addition to everyone over the age of 10 in any public setting. Social distancing and occupancy restrictions (where applicable) are still in place.

How does the mask ordinance work at events such as weddings, anniversary parties, conferences, etc.?

Any food and drink should be consumed at a table or in a setting that is set up to allow for social distancing. Individuals cannot walk around a room talking and drinking/eating. Masks must be worn during times guests are up moving around, for example when coming in, going to use the restroom, etc. Masks do not need to be worn while they are seated at their table socially distanced from others.

Are churches exempt from this ordinance?

No, churches and places of worship are not exempt from the ordinance. Masks should be worn in these establishments, but can be taken off while seated, as long as spaced at least 6 feet apart from others.