

Mask Wearing 101: Help Stop the Spread

Face masks are this year's most important school supply. As we eagerly await the reopening of our schools, we all can – and must – do our part to take care of one another by wearing masks during the COVID-19 pandemic. Wearing a cloth or disposable face mask that covers your nose and mouth helps protect others in case you're infected with COVID-19, even when you're not showing symptoms. (Gaiters and bandanas are not recommended face coverings. Masks with valves or vents are not allowed because they are not effective at preventing the spread of COVID-19 or any other respiratory virus from person to person).

We understand it will take some getting used to – all of us are adapting to what wearing a mask looks and feels like in our daily lives. For now, we can think of wearing masks like wearing shoes: Always put them on when you leave the house.

Masks will be required for all students over the age of three and all adults when on school grounds. Masks will also be required for students riding the bus to and from school. Below are guidelines we've drafted with support from our health partners and our DPS nursing staff:

How to properly wear a mask:

- Wash your hands before putting on your mask
- Put the mask over your nose and mouth and secure it under your chin
- Try to fit it snugly against the sides of your face
- Make sure you can breathe easily
- Don't put the face covering around your neck or up on your forehead
- Avoid touching your mask, and if you do touch it, please wash your hands or use hand sanitizer to disinfect

How to safely remove a face covering:

- Untie the strings behind your head or stretch the ear loops
- Handle only by the ear loops or ties
- Fold outside corners together
- Be careful not to touch your eyes, nose, and mouth when removing and wash hands immediately after removing.

For more information, view the [CDC's guidelines](#) and [Children's Hospital Colorado guidance](#) for wearing masks.

Are there any exceptions?

Students who plan to return to in-person learning when our buildings open should also plan to wear a mask. Students will be able to take off their masks during meals and other designated “mask breaks” that will take place outside. Aside from these two instances, there are very few accepted reasons as to why a student would need to take off a mask.

Exceptions:

- Students receiving speech therapy or working on articulation will have access to either a clear mask, plexiglass barrier during specialized instruction, or both a face and plexiglass barrier during instruction.
- To support students who are deaf and hard of hearing and who are able to communicate with other students by reading lips, we will provide teachers and classmates with clear masks as well.
- Students who have cognitive, physical, or adaptive disabilities and attend MI (multi-intensive) and MI-S (multi intensive-severe) classrooms.
- Students with significant sensory sensitivities may be exempt, such as children with conditions like autism spectrum disorders.
- Children with significant medical issues that would make it impossible for them to remove their face covering independently if they were having trouble breathing.
- For information on school or medical accommodations, please contact the school nurse or the special education coordinator at your student's school.

Caring for and cleaning your mask

There are two ways to clean your mask: in your washing machine or by hand.

Washing machine: You can include your mask with your regular laundry, using your laundry detergent. Use the warmest appropriate water setting for the cloth used to make the mask.

Washing by hand: Prepare a bleach solution by mixing 4 teaspoons of household bleach per quart of room temperature water. Make sure to check the label of your bleach to see if it is intended for disinfection. Soak the mask in the bleach solution for five minutes, and then rinse thoroughly with cool water.

Drying your mask: Make sure to completely dry your mask after washing. You can lay your mask flat and allow it to completely dry, either inside or in direct sunlight. Alternatively, you can place your mask in a dryer on the highest heat setting.

Thank you for doing your part

Face masks are an additional step to help slow the spread of COVID-19 when combined with everyday preventive actions like washing your hands, practicing safe social distancing, and staying home when you are showing symptoms of the coronavirus. **Thank you for playing an important role in keeping our schools safe and open by wearing a mask.**