

Frequently Asked Questions: Face Covering Requirement *Updated June 26, 2020*

Why are face coverings now required?

Salt Lake County, like much of Utah, has seen an alarming increase in the spread of COVID-19 in recent weeks. Prior to June, we never had more than 150 positive cases in a day, and on most days, we saw fewer than 100. We are now consistently seeing 200 or more new cases reported each day. Consistent, widespread use of correctly worn face coverings is one of the most effective ways to help control transmission of the illness.

Does an increase in testing lead to an increase in cases?

No, an increase in cases is not due to increased testing; our test positivity rate has increased from a 5% average to nearly 8%, which indicates a significant increase in transmission of the virus.

Who supports this new requirement?

Our local health care leaders and public health experts—including those at the Utah Department of Health—agree that face coverings are essential to controlling this pandemic. Business, community, and faith leaders—including the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—support the use of face coverings.

Are face coverings effective?

Yes, wearing a face covering correctly is one of the easiest ways we can help our local businesses, high-risk population, and our community as whole. At least two recent peer-reviewed studies confirmed the effectiveness of face coverings reducing the COVID-19 transmission risk by 75%-80%.

How do you wear a face covering correctly?

Wear it correctly: comfortably snug over your nose AND mouth, with no rips or tears. #CoverYourFaceHoles. The CDC recommends the use of any face covering that prevents the spread of respiratory secretions, an N-95 or professionally made mask is not essential; you can make an effective cloth face covering from a variety of items likely around your home. The CDC has some [ideas](#) for both sewn and non-sewn face coverings from common items.

Who do face coverings help protect?

Your face covering protects others; their face covering protects you. Even if you're not at high risk, someone you love or are near could be. Face coverings are the responsible, safe thing to wear when you leave home—just like seat belts are the responsible, safe thing to wear when you are driving. Going out in public without a face covering is like driving drunk; even if you don't hurt yourself, you're putting other people's lives at risk.

What situations REQUIRE face coverings?

- Face coverings are **required** in Salt Lake County at public gatherings, indoor or out, where consistent social distancing is not possible.
- They are also **required** while waiting outside or inside retail and other public locations, including bars and restaurants until seated.

Headed out the door? Check: keys, wallet/purse, phone, and face covering.

What situations DO NOT require face coverings?

- Outdoors when social distancing is easily maintained.
- On a person with a health condition exacerbated by a face covering, such as asthma.
- On children under 2 years old.
- When wearing a face covering would prevent the performance of the essential functions of person's job or work.
- In circumstances not reasonably conducive to wearing a face covering, such as while swimming or engaging in strenuous physical activity*.

**It is impossible to account for every potential exception, so we ask Salt Lake County residents and visitors to use common sense and practice common decency when interpreting and applying the requirement to their public activities.*

What if I don't have a face covering?

or

What if I can't afford a face covering?

Both the state and county have face coverings available, particularly for vulnerable populations and people without economic means to purchase them. We will be partnering with community organizations to distribute face coverings to people in need. Next week, we hope to have 20 locations around the county, primarily in lower-income neighborhoods, to distribute face coverings at no cost to the recipients.

Salt Lake County facilities, such as libraries, may be among the distribution sites.

You can also [request a free face covering from the State of Utah](#).

Will I be penalized for not wearing a face covering?

Violations of the requirement will be handled like violations of other health regulations: primarily with education about the regulation and its purpose. Repeat and egregious violators could receive a formal Notice of Violation (NOV) and order to comply. Notices of Violation do not carry fines but repeatedly ignoring an NOV and the request to comply could, eventually, result in criminal and civil penalties.

Are businesses required to enforce face coverings?

- Yes, businesses should handle the face covering requirement just like they handle other health requirements and public-decency expectations in their establishments, such as "No shirt, no shoes, no service."
- Posting signage is an easy, effective way for business owners and operators to remind customers of the requirement. The attached signage (plus more that's applicable) is already available on [the health department's COVID-19 "Print Materials" page](#).

Should I report a business that is not enforcing face coverings?

If you find a public business not enforcing the face covering requirement, the first thing you should do is politely ask them to begin doing so. If that is ineffective, you may report a noncompliant public business in Salt Lake County by calling **385-468-INFO (4636) Monday through Friday from 8am to 5pm**, or online anytime at SaltLakeHealth.org.