



UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON COVID-19 FACE COVERING POLICY

INTRODUCTION

The University of Washington's (UW) COVID-19 Face Covering Policy is in alignment with federal, state and local agencies, workplace safety requirements and public health guidance. This includes the [Washington State Department of Labor and Industries \(L&I\)](#) workplace health and safety requirements, the [Washington State Department of Health Face Covering Order](#), and local public health agency guidance. This policy is in effect until otherwise modified or rescinded.

Additional information and resources are available on the [Face Covering Policy webpage](#) on the UW Environmental Health & Safety Department website. *UW Medicine medical facility personnel follow UW Medicine face covering and personal protective equipment policies.*

As part of the University's multi-layered strategy to limit the transmission of COVID-19, **face coverings are required to be worn indoors at the University of Washington, regardless of vaccination status, in the following settings:**

1. **Healthcare settings** and when conducting patient care activities, regardless of vaccination status. This includes the following:
 - UW Medicine medical facilities
 - Hall Health Center clinical floors, elevators, stairwells
 - School of Dentistry clinical areas
 - Employee Health Centers
 - COVID-19 testing sites
 - UW Speech and Hearing Clinic
 - Psychiatry and mental health counseling clinical areas
 - Center on Human Development and Disability (CHDD) clinical areas
 - Clinical research settings when conducting clinical activities
 - Health Sciences clinical training classrooms and settings when simulation of patient care activities are conducted
 - Airlift Northwest facilities and aircraft
 - Other settings when [patient care/clinical activities](#) are conducted
2. **UW Shuttles serving healthcare:** Health Sciences Express, South Lake Union, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center/Seattle Cancer Care Alliance
3. **Personnel** and students who have **tested positive for COVID-19** or have been in **close contact** with someone who tested positive are required to wear a well-fitted, high-quality mask [such as an N95, KN95, KN94 or surgical mask](#) until 10 days after start of symptoms, 10 days after positive test (with no symptoms), or 10 days after their last contact with the COVID-19 positive individual as indicated on the [COVID-19 Public Health Flowchart](#).



In all other indoor settings, face coverings are *recommended* when [COVID-19 community levels](#) are low and *strongly recommended* when community levels are medium (for King and/or Pierce counties), particularly for the following:

- Individuals who are not [up-to-date on COVID-19 vaccines and boosters](#)
- Immunocompromised individuals or those at [high risk](#) for severe illness (particularly when [COVID-19 community levels](#) are medium or high)
- Childcare settings
- Activities that may generate more respiratory aerosols and involve frequent close contact (being within 6 feet of others), such as indoor performing arts
- Crowded settings especially when there is a decreased ability to distance from others (including outdoors) or when in spaces that may not be well ventilated
- When an EH&S risk assessment of activities determines there is a higher risk of exposure to SARS-CoV-2 (e.g., working with unvaccinated populations)

University face covering requirements will be re-evaluated due to changes in [COVID-19 community levels](#), changes in campus transmission patterns, and/or due to the emergence of more virulent variants of concern. At the beginning of any given academic quarter, face covering requirements/recommendations may be temporarily more stringent (e.g., strongly recommended even with a low COVID-19 community level) due to the increased risk from individuals traveling to the University from other locations. Any changes are made through consensus with the UW Advisory Committee on Communicable Diseases and in accordance with the CDC, state, and local public health and occupational safety agency guidance and requirements. The current status of the University's face covering recommendations and requirements will be maintained on the [UW Face Covering Policy website](#).

The University continues to implement a multi-layered [COVID-19 Prevention Plan](#). Being [vaccinated against COVID-19](#) (including being up-to-date on vaccine boosters) is the most critical element of this plan. Face coverings continue to be an important element, along with staying home if you are sick or experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, practicing good hygiene, getting tested and reporting a positive test result, cleaning and disinfection, and communication and education.

For the purposes of this policy, a face covering must: Fit snugly against the sides of the face; completely cover the nose and mouth; be secured with ties, ear loops, elastic bands, or another equally effective method; include at least two layers of material; allow for breathing without restriction; be free of holes, tears or valves that have the potential to release respiratory droplets. A face covering that provides a higher level of protection than a cloth face covering alone, such as a medical procedure/surgical mask, a [KF94 mask, a KN95 mask, or an N95 respirator](#) is preferred. If a cloth face covering is utilized, it must be capable of being laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape.

2. APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to **all University personnel, students, contractors, vendors, tenants, customers and visitors**, on site at a University location, including campus residence halls, unless specifically exempted as specified in **Section 3**.

For the purposes of this policy, "University personnel" includes:

- Faculty, librarians and other academic personnel; students who work on site at a University work location; staff, including contract-covered, classified non-union, temporary hourly, and professional staff; Hall Health physicians; and Intercollegiate Athletics (ICA) contract employees.



- Individuals who have a contingent worker or appointment relationship with UW, stipend recipients, and others who work on site at a University location but are not employees of the University.

3. EXEMPTIONS

Where face coverings are required, the following exemptions apply to this policy:

- a. Face coverings do not replace required job-specific PPE, such as respirators, medical/procedure masks, and face shields.
- b. Personal office/workspaces: Working or spending time alone in a personal office or workspace with the door closed or open by a few inches to allow others to know if the room is occupied
- c. When actively eating or drinking
- d. When any party to a communication is deaf or hard of hearing and not wearing a face covering is essential to communication
- e. When necessary to confirm the person's identity
- f. When unable to put on a face covering due to an emergency
- g. While showering, bathing, or engaging in other personal hygiene or grooming activities that require the removal of a face covering
- h. Children younger than five years old: Children who are younger than two years old should not wear a face covering due to the risk of suffocation. Children who are two, three, or four years old, with the assistance and close supervision of an adult, are recommended to wear a face covering when around non-household members.
- i. Modifications to the application of this policy as approved by EH&S and the Executive Office for specialized operations or programs not covered by the listed exemptions where alternative health and safety measures and protocols are implemented to reduce the risk of transmission while also meeting the state and local compliance requirements.

4. UNIVERSITY UNIT RESPONSIBILITIES

Units are required to provide all personnel working on site at a University work location with face coverings and/or job-required PPE and replace them when necessary. Personnel may use a personal alternative face covering as appropriate, as long as it complies with requirements in this policy.

University units must train personnel on the proper use, including replacement, care, storage and disposal of face coverings and PPE. This includes informing personnel on the location and process for obtaining face coverings within their workspaces or on campus. Units should refer to the [Facemask Use Guidance](#) for training personnel on the selection, care and use of face coverings and facemasks. Units can also refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance with regard to [type and fit](#), [wearing](#) and [washing](#) face coverings.

Units must communicate and enforce applicable face covering requirements to all personnel working on site at a University work location and ensure all personnel are trained on the [University's COVID-19 Prevention Plan](#). [Signs](#) indicating the face covering requirements or recommendations should be clearly posted at building entrances

The University of Washington is committed to maintaining a respectful, productive, inclusive, and equitable workplace, and discrimination and other conduct that is inconsistent with our values will not be tolerated.



5. POLICY ENFORCEMENT

a. In the Workplace:

Personnel are required to comply with this policy as a condition of employment, as well as for the health and safety of themselves, their colleagues, and the UW community. Units are required to ensure all of their personnel have a thorough understanding of the requirements outlined in this policy. If, after education and training, personnel refuse to comply, contact your college/school/campus's dean/chancellor office or your unit's human resources/academic human resources (HR/AHR) representative to initiate the appropriate corrective action or standard of conduct process. If your dean/chancellor's office or unit's human resources representatives require assistance, they should contact their central HR consultant or Academic Human Resources business partner. If personnel state they are unable to wear a mask due to a health condition, refer the individual to the [formal accommodation request process](#). University personnel with concerns that other personnel are not complying should speak with their supervisor or report it to [EH&S](#).

b. Students:

Students are required to follow the University's COVID-19 Face Covering Policy at all times when on-site at the University, including any posted requirements in specific buildings or spaces.

If a student refuses to comply with the policy, the student can be asked to leave University premises. If they live in an on-campus residence hall, they can return to their residence hall unit. [Student Conduct](#) offices are available for consultations on potential violations of student conduct if needed. University personnel with concerns that a student or group of students are not complying with this policy should speak with their supervisor, consult with the campus student conduct office, or [report it to EH&S](#). Students concerned about other students should contact their campus student conduct office.

c. Members of the public, customers and visitors on campus:

Members of the public, patients, customers and visitors to the University are required to follow the University's face covering policy and wear face coverings when entering a University facility or area that requires them in order to receive service in accordance with this policy. If a member of the public, customer or visitor is not wearing a face covering in a required area, the following steps are to be taken:

- Begin with a polite verbal request for compliance to educate and persuade the individual to wear a face covering. University personnel should ask the individual to wear a mask or face covering, and have a supply of disposable facemasks to offer individuals who do not have one.
- If, following a polite verbal request, the individual continues to decline to wear a face covering or facemask, personnel should notify the site manager to assist the customer with determining if accommodations, such as curbside pickup, can be made.
- If the individual refuses to wear a face covering and does not indicate a medical condition or disability that prevents them from wearing a face covering, they should be politely informed that they are not permitted to enter and be asked to leave. Personnel should not attempt to physically block an individual or physically remove them from the space and should avoid confrontation but should not provide service. Law enforcement (e.g., University of Washington Police Department or local law enforcement agency) may be called for help as a last resort.
- For additional guidance on mask use in areas where masks are recommended, refer to the frequently asked questions (FAQ) section of the [UW Face Covering Policy website](#).



6. ACCOMMODATION RESOURCES

Individuals required to wear a face covering who have the following medical conditions or health risks may request an accommodation: a mental health condition, a developmental or cognitive condition, or a disability that prevents them from wearing a face covering. This includes, but is not limited to, persons with a medical condition for whom wearing a face covering could obstruct breathing, who are unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without assistance.

For University personnel requesting a medical or health risk accommodation, determination of the accommodation will be made on a case-by-case basis with the unit human resources representatives in coordination with the Disability Services Office (DSO), the unit, and EH&S. The [UWHR website](#) provides for more information about this process. Personnel may be required to provide documentation to substantiate their need for an accommodation.

Students seeking an accommodation should contact [Disability Resources for Students \(DRS\)](#) for determination of a medical or health risk. Accommodation will be made on a case-by-case basis through consultation with DRS.