



Update effective November 21, 2023

## UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON COVID-19 FACE COVERING POLICY

### 1. 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, 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 This policy is in effect until otherwise modified or rescinded.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 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 at the University of Washington:**

**Effective November 21, 2023, high quality face masks (e.g., N95, surgical masks) are required to be worn by UW personnel in all UW patient care settings including clinical research settings, dental clinics, and UW shuttles serving healthcare facilities.** The face mask requirements in UW healthcare facilities are [based on respiratory virus transmission metrics for COVID-19, flu, and RSV](#). All patients, visitors, and families are strongly encouraged to wear a mask while in clinical spaces. *Follow the mask signs posted upon entry to clinics.*

In alignment with CDC and local public health guidance:

- Masks are **strongly recommended when returning to campus after ending [COVID-19 isolation](#)**, indoors when around others until 10 days have passed from the start of illness.
- Masks **are strongly recommended after a higher risk COVID-19 [exposure](#)**, indoors when around others until 10 days have passed from when you were exposed. In addition, follow the instructions for testing and symptom monitoring on the [COVID-19 Public Health Flowchart](#).

Otherwise, **face coverings are optional** and may be considered for the following:

- Immunocompromised individuals or those at [high risk](#) for severe illness in crowded settings.
- Healthcare settings when they are not required.

University face covering requirements will be re-evaluated when there are changes in public health conditions, regulations, or public health agency guidelines. At the beginning of an academic quarter, face covering requirements/recommendations may be temporarily more stringent (e.g., strongly recommended) due to the increased risk from individuals traveling to the University from other locations. Any changes to this policy are made in coordination



with the UW Advisory Committee on Communicable Diseases and in accordance with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 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](#).

Face coverings continue to be an important element of the University's multi-layered [COVID-19 Health & Safety Plan](#). Being [vaccinated against COVID-19](#) (including being up-to-date on vaccine boosters) is the most critical element of this plan, along with staying home if you are sick or experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, practicing good hygiene, getting tested, 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, such as a medical procedure/surgical mask, a [KF94 mask, a KN95 mask, or an N95 respirator](#) is recommended, and fulfill the requirements of this policy.

## 2. APPLICABILITY

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

For the purposes of this policy, "University personnel" includes all employee groups described in UW Administrative Policy Statement 40.1, including:

- 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 personal protective equipment (PPE), such as respirators, medical/procedure masks, and face shields. 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.
- b. When actively eating or drinking
- c. When any party to a communication is deaf or hard of hearing and not wearing a



face covering is essential to communication

- d. When necessary to confirm the person's identity
- e. When unable to put on a face covering due to an emergency
- f. While showering, bathing, or engaging in other personal hygiene or grooming activities that require the removal of a face covering
- g. 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.
- h. Modifications to the application of this policy as approved by Environmental Health & Safety and the Executive Office for specialized operations or programs not covered by the listed exemptions.

#### 4. UNIVERSITY UNIT RESPONSIBILITIES

Units are required to provide all personnel working on site at a University work location with face coverings where they are required and/or job-required PPE and replace them when necessary. When not required, University units are required to make face coverings available; the University will make [facemasks available at no cost](#) in select University locations.

University units must train personnel on the proper use, including replacement, care, storage and disposal of face coverings and PPE. This includes informing personnel of the location and process for obtaining face coverings within their workspaces or on campus. Units should refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance with regard to [type and fit, wearing, and replacing 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 Health & Safety Plan](#).

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 [Environmental Health & Safety](#).

## **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. [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 Environmental Health & Safety](#). 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 COVID-19 Face Covering Policy; individuals must wear a face covering when entering a University facility or area that requires it in order to receive services in accordance with this policy. If a member of the public, customer, or visitor is not wearing a face covering in an area where it is required, 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 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 optional, refer to the frequently asked questions (FAQ) section of the [UW Face Covering Policy website](#).



## 6. ACCOMMODATION RESOURCES

Individuals who are required to wear a face covering and 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 Environmental Health & Safety. The [UWHR website](#) provides for more information about this process. Personnel will 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.