

Face Coverings in Child Care

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Face coverings and child care

[According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), COVID-19 spreads mainly from person to person through respiratory droplets. Respiratory droplets travel into the air when you cough, sneeze, talk, shout, or sing. These droplets can then land in the mouths or noses of people who are near you or they may breathe these droplets in.

Face coverings are a simple barrier to help prevent your respiratory droplets from reaching others. Studies show that face coverings reduce the spray of droplets when worn over the nose and mouth.

Individuals should wear a face covering, even if you do not feel sick. This is because several studies have found that people with COVID-19 who never develop symptoms (asymptomatic) and those who are not yet showing symptoms (pre-symptomatic) can still spread the virus to other people. Wearing a face covering helps protect those around you in case you are infected but not showing symptoms.

A face covering also offers protection to you too. How well it protects you depends on the type of fabric, the number of layers of fabric, and how well the face covering fits.

It is especially important to wear a face covering when you are indoors with people you do not live with and when you are unable to stay at least 6 feet. COVID-19 spreads mainly among people who are in [close contact](#) with one another.

[NC Department of Health and Human Services \(NC DHHS\)](#) and [Governor Cooper’s Executive Order 163 and 180](#), require North Carolinians to wear face coverings over their nose and mouth when in public places, both indoors and outdoors. Even those that have recovered from COVID and/or received the vaccine must continue to wear a face covering. NC DHHS has answers to Frequently Asked Questions for North Carolinians about Cloth Face Covering in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

Child care facilities can use the information in this document along with the [Child Care Strong NC Public Health Toolkit](#) which was **updated on December 10, 2020**, to guide policy and practices around the use of face coverings.

Face Coverings in Child Care

Face covering requirements in child care

All adults and children 5 years and older are required to wear face coverings:

- indoors
- outdoors, if individuals are unable to maintain six feet of social distance
- while in transportation.

Face coverings are highly recommended for children 2 years of age and older if they can:

- wear the mask correctly
- avoid frequent touching of the mask and their face
- limit sucking, drooling onto the mask
- remove without help

To help children adapt to face coverings:

- Use these tips and share with families:
 - [Masks or Cloth Face Coverings for Children during COVID-19 \(from Healthychildren.org\)](#)
 - [Mask up! Talking to Young Children about Wearing Masks \(from Zero to Three\)](#)
- Read these stories with children:
 - In English:
 - [Wearing Masks](#)
 - [My Teacher Wears a Mask](#)
 - In Spanish:
 - [Usando Mascaras](#)
- Share this video with children
 - [Help Stop the Spread of Germs](#)

Child care facilities should also:

- Remind individuals not to touch their face covering and to wash their hands frequently.
- Share guidance and information with staff and families on the proper use, wearing, removal of face coverings, and cleaning. Helpful documents include [CDC's guidance on wearing and removing cloth face coverings](#) and [CDC's use of cloth face coverings](#).

How to select and wear a face covering

When [selecting a face covering](#), there are many choices.

- can be secured with ear loops
- have attachments (such as buttons, stickers, etc.) that could be a choking hazard
- have loose strings as they pose a risk of choking or strangulation
- are made of fabric that makes it hard to breathe, for example, vinyl
- have exhalation valves or vents that allow particles to escape
- are intended for healthcare workers, including N95 respirators or surgical masks

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DO choose face coverings that:

- fit properly (snugly around the nose and chin with no large gaps around the sides of the face)
- completely cover the nose and mouth
- are made with washable, breathable fabric that is tightly woven (i.e., fabrics that do not let light pass through when held up to a light source)
- are made with two or three layers, or have inner pockets for inserting a filter
- allow for breathing without restriction
- can be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to the shape

DO NOT choose face coverings that:

- have attachments (such as buttons, stickers, etc.) that could be a choking hazard
- are made of fabric that makes it hard to breathe, for example, vinyl, plastic, or leather
- have exhalation valves or vents that allow particles to escape
- are made from loosely woven fabric or that are knitted (i.e., fabrics that let light pass through)
- are intended for healthcare workers, including N95 respirators

Use caution with gaiters, as their effectiveness is not known at this time.

DO choose masks that



Have two or more layers of washable, breathable fabric



Completely cover your nose and mouth



Fit snugly against the sides of your face and don't have gaps

DO NOT choose Masks that



Are made of fabric that makes it hard to breathe, for example, vinyl



Have exhalation valves or vents which allow virus particles to escape



Are intended for healthcare workers, including N95 respirators or surgical masks

Disposable masks are single-use masks that are sold online and at stores. These are not the same as surgical or other medical masks and can be used as an alternative to cloth face coverings.

Disposable masks are a good option in situations where your mask is likely to get wet or dirty. As with cloth masks, make sure the disposable mask fits well without large side-gaps and completely covers the nose and mouth. Bring extra disposable masks with you in case you need to change out a dirty or wet mask and throw away disposable masks after a single use.

For children,

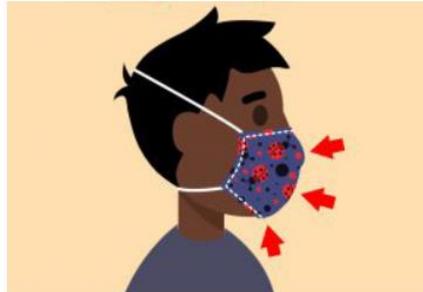
- Ask parents to find a face covering that is made for children, if possible. ask parents to find a face covering that is made for children, if possible, and is secured with ear loops rather than loose strings that may pose a risk of choking or strangulation
- be sure the face covering fits snugly over the nose and mouth and under the chin

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Children



Find a mask that is made for children to help ensure proper fit



Check to be sure the mask fits snugly over the nose and mouth and under the chin and that there are no gaps around the sides



Do NOT put on children younger than 2 years old

Who should not wear a cloth face covering?

Cloth face coverings should **NOT** be placed on:

- Children under the age of 2
- Anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the face covering without assistance; or
- Anyone who cannot tolerate a cloth face covering due to developmental, medical, or behavioral health needs.

For children over the age of two, face coverings should **NOT** be used if:

- the only face covering available is a possible choking or strangulation hazard, for example, one with long ties and/or requiring knots to secure in place.
- wearing the face covering causes the child to [touch their face more frequently than not wearing it](#).

Considerations for younger children

Younger children may be unable to wear a face covering properly, particularly for an extended period. Child care program staff can prioritize having children wear face coverings at times when it is difficult for children to maintain a distance of 6 feet from others (such as during pick-up or drop-off, when standing in line). Staff should make sure face coverings fit children properly and provide children with frequent reminders and education on the importance and proper way to wear face coverings. Additionally, small children are more likely to touch their face covering, so caretakers should wash children's hands often.

When should face coverings be removed?

Remove face coverings while children are:

- Sleeping
- Eating
- Swimming (or when the face covering would get wet)

Face coverings should also be replaced when they are visibly soiled or become damp.

[Contact your local Child Care Health Consultant](#) for questions or additional guidance.

Can I re-wear my face covering before laundering?

Adults and children should have more than one face covering available for use throughout the day. Face coverings should be replaced whenever they become damp or visibly soiled. Disposable face coverings should be discarded after a

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single use. Store wet or dirty cloth face coverings securely and separate from clean face coverings and wash as soon as possible to prevent them from becoming moldy.

If it is necessary to re-wear your cloth face covering before laundering:

1. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water before removing a face covering.
2. Face coverings should be removed without touching the front or inside of the face covering, which could be contaminated. Untie or remove the cloth face covering by touching only the ear loops or the straps (untie bottom ties first). Be careful not to touch your eyes, nose, and mouth when removing the cloth face covering.
3. Place the cloth face covering with the inside, the side closest to your face, facing up:
 - onto a clean paper towel if only removing momentarily or
 - inside a washable container that is labeled with the owner's name
 - in a dry paper bagBe sure that the handles which have been touched by your hands, do not touch the inside of the face covering.
4. If using a washable container, leave it open to the air and store it out of reach of children. Clean and disinfect the container at least once per day.
5. Wash hands again.
6. When replacing the cloth face covering, follow the steps for "How do I put on a face covering" being careful to pick up by the straps.



What about face shields?

The NC Governor's Executive Order 163, effective September 4th, 2020, states that face shields no longer meet the requirements for wearing face coverings. The CDC states:

A face shield is primarily used for eye protection for the person wearing it. At this time, it is not known what level of protection a face shield provides to people nearby from the spray of respiratory droplets from the wearer. There is currently not enough evidence to support the effectiveness of face shields for source control. Therefore, CDC does not currently recommend the use of face shields as a substitute for face coverings.

Child care providers may consider wearing a face shield **in addition to** a cloth face covering when having continued close contact with people who cannot wear a face covering due to

- their age and/or development
- a physical or developmental disability
- a medical condition

The use of a face shield and a face covering together may provide further protection.

With proper cleaning, a face shield may be used along with the cloth face covering until it:

- becomes damaged,
- no longer fastens securely, or
- it can no longer be seen through.

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What about clear face coverings or cloth face coverings with a clear plastic panel?

Clear face coverings or cloth face coverings with a clear plastic panel are an alternative type of face covering for people who interact with

- people who are deaf or hard of hearing
- young children or students learning to read
- students learning a new language
- people with disabilities
- people who need to see the proper shape of the mouth for making appropriate vowel sounds, e.g., in singing



If this type of face covering is used, make sure

- it fits snugly at the sides of the face and under the chin
- it allows the person wearing it to breathe easily
- excess moisture does not collect on the inside of the mask
- the mask is removed before sleeping since the plastic part could form a seal around the mouth and nose and make it hard to breathe

When should cloth face coverings be laundered and how?

Cloth face coverings should be laundered whenever they become damp or visibly soiled and at least daily. They must be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape. The [CDC recommends the following](#):

- Launder items according to the manufacturer's instructions. Use the warmest appropriate water setting and dry items completely.
- Do not shake dirty laundry.
- Wear gloves when handling contaminated masks/laundry and follow proper handwashing procedures at all times.
- Clean and disinfect laundry receptacles daily by:
 - Cleaning with soap and water then
 - Disinfecting with a bleach solution of 1000 ppm, alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol content or an [EPA approved disinfectant](#) that is effective against COVID-19

Discard cloth face coverings that:

- No longer cover the nose and mouth
- Have stretched out or damaged ties or straps
- Cannot stay on the face
- Have holes or tears in the fabric.

How do I put on the face covering?

1. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water before putting on a face covering.
2. Check cloth face coverings for tears, worn stitching, missing ties, or ear loops. Discard any that are defective. Select a new disposable mask, if used.
3. Secure the loops around the ears or (for adults) tie the upper and then lower ties behind your head with a bow. Make sure it covers your nose and mouth to the bottom edge of your chin.
4. Wash hands again for at least 20 seconds with soap and water.

How do I remove the face covering?

1. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water before removing a face covering.

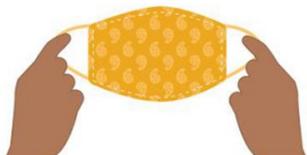
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2. Face coverings should be removed without touching the front or inside of the face covering, which could be contaminated. Untie or remove the cloth face covering by touching only the ear loops or the straps (untie bottom ties first). Be careful not to touch your eyes, nose, and mouth when removing the cloth face covering.
3. Place the used cloth face covering in a laundry receptacle that can be cleaned and disinfected. Discard disposable masks after a single use. Do not touch anything else before washing hands.
4. Wash hands again for at least 20 seconds with soap and water.



1

Carefully, untie the strings behind your head or stretch the ear loops



2

Handle only by the earloops or ties



3

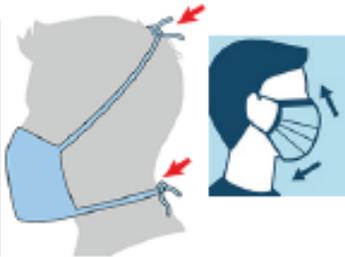
Fold the outside corners together



4

Be careful not to touch your eyes, nose, and mouth when removing and wash hands immediately after removing

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Cloth Face Coverings					
PUTTING ON					<p>Refer to the current Interim Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Guidance for Child Care Settings from NCDHHS for when to use cloth face coverings.</p> <p>Cloth face coverings should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ not be used to replace social distancing practices ✓ not be worn by children under 2 ✓ not be worn by anyone that is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unable to remove it without assistance, • having trouble breathing, • who is unconscious, or incapacitated ✓ fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face ✓ allow for unrestricted breathing ✓ not be adjusted when wearing - avoid touching face with hands ✓ be removed completely when eating/drinking ✓ be laundered each time it is removed
	<p>1. Wash hands For at least 20 seconds with soap and water.</p>	<p>2. Check the cloth face covering Inspect for tears, worn stitching, missing ties or ear loops. Throw away masks that are defective.</p>	<p>3. Secure to your face Secure the loops around the ears or tie the upper and then lower ties behind your head with a bow. Make sure it covers your nose and mouth to the bottom edge of your chin.</p>	<p>4. Wash hands For at least 20 seconds with soap and water.</p>	
TAKING OFF					
	<p>1. Wash hands For at least 20 seconds with soap and water</p>	<p>2. Remove Untie or remove the cloth face covering by touching only the ear loops or the straps (untie bottom ties first). Be careful not to touch the inside or outside which could be contaminated.</p>	<p>3. Place in a laundry receptacle Place the used cloth face covering in a laundry receptacle that can be cleaned and disinfected. Do not touch anything else before washing hands.</p>	<p>4. Wash hands For at least 20 seconds with soap and water.</p>	