

California Department of Public Health Guidance for Face Coverings at Schools (January 14, 2021)

CDPH guidance for common school topics. For more information, please refer to the [CDPH COVID-19 and Reopening In-Person Instruction Framework & Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools in California, 2020-2021 School Year](#)

Who should wear a face covering?

- All students, staff and visitors over the age of 2 should wear face coverings at all times while on campus except when eating or drinking. This applies to whether they are indoors or outdoors. When eating or drinking, students and staff should maintain physical distancing to reduce the chance of transmission.

Will any face covering work?

- Generally yes, but not all masks provide the same amount of protection. Please see the state's [tips on face coverings](#) for more info.
- For staff who come into regular contact with others, CDPH recommends the use of disposable, three-ply surgical masks, which are more effective than cloth face coverings.

What if an individual cannot wear a face covering?

- The state's [face covering guidance](#) recognizes that there are some people who cannot wear a face covering for a number of reasons. People are exempted from the requirement if they are under age 2, have a medical or mental health condition or disability that would impede them from properly wearing or handling a mask, or when it would inhibit communication with a person who is hearing impaired.

Persons exempted from wearing a face covering due to a medical condition should wear a non-restrictive alternative, such as a face shield with a drape on the bottom edge, as long as their condition permits it.

Here are some considerations for individuals who must wear a face shield instead of a mask:

- Although evidence on face shields is limited, the available data suggest that the following face shields may provide better source control than others:
 - Face shields that wrap around the sides of the wearer's face and extend below the chin
 - Hooded face shields
- Face shield wearers should wash their hands before and after removing the face shield and avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth when removing it.
- Disposable face shields should only be worn for a single use and disposed of according to manufacturer instructions.

- Reusable face shields should be cleaned and disinfected after each use according to manufacturer instructions or by following CDC face shield cleaning instructions .

What if someone forgets to bring their mask to school?

- Schools should develop protocols to provide a face covering to students or staff who forget to bring a face covering to school to prevent unnecessary exclusions.

What if a student refuses to wear a mask at school?

- Schools must exclude students from campus if they are not exempted from wearing a face covering and refuse to wear one provided by the school.
- Schools should offer alternative educational opportunities for students who are excluded from campus because they refuse to wear a face covering.

What is the guidance on face coverings and physical distancing on buses?

- Maximize space between students and between students and the driver. Open windows to the greatest extent practicable. Two windows on a bus should be opened fully at a minimum.
- Designate routes for entry and exit, using as many entrances as feasible.
- Ensure each school bus is equipped with extra, unused face coverings for students who may not have one.

Additional and supporting resources:

- [CDPH COVID-19 and Reopening In-Person Instruction Framework & Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools in California, 2020-2021 School Year](#)
- [CDPH Guidance for the Use of Face Coverings](#)