



NAVY AND MARINE CORPS PUBLIC HEALTH CENTER

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Cloth Face Covering Guidance for Non-Healthcare Workers

Background: Per SECDEF memorandum “DoD Guidance on the Use of Cloth Face Coverings” (dated 05 April 2020), SECDEF states Military personnel, DoD civilian employees, their family members, and DoD contractors are strongly encouraged to follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendation on using cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain, especially in areas of significant community-based transmission.

Per NAVADMIN 100/20 “Navy Guidance on the use of Face Coverings” (dated 20 April 2020), states effectively immediately, all individuals on DoD property, installations, and facilities are required to wear cloth face coverings when they cannot maintain six feet of social distance. This includes Military personnel, Navy civilian employees, family members, Navy contractors, and all other individuals on DoD property, installations, and facilities.

As the situation continues to evolve, continue to monitor and review updated policy and local guidance.

Purpose: Provide face covering guidelines for **non-healthcare workers**, which is defined as a person working in a low to moderate risk exposure environment, i.e., food service, grocery stores, retail, or other businesses where employees have minimal occupational contact with the public and coworkers.

Type of Covering: Non-healthcare workers can use simple cloth coverings that completely cover the mouth and nose. Due to personal protective equipment (PPE) shortages, only personnel with high exposure risk, i.e., healthcare workers and frontline responders, should use medical-grade masks, e.g., N95 respirators or surgical face masks.



Navy Lodge associates using cloth masks.
(Navy photo by NEXCOM Public Affairs)

Guidelines

Personnel must continue to:

- Follow all current illness policies or guidelines to reduce the risk of transmission.
- Engage in social distancing and stay at least **six feet away** from another person.

Personnel should follow these guidelines when wearing a face covering at their place of employment:

1. Before handling a covering, thoroughly wash your hands and face with soap and warm water.
2. Coverings **must** be worn correctly and **must** fully cover your nose and mouth. Ensure no gaps exist between your face and the cloth (facial hair may interfere with protective barrier seal).
3. While putting on a face covering, avoid touching the mask portion of the PPE or your face. If you do, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water.
4. When the covering becomes soiled, damp, or damaged, replace immediately. Never re-use single-use masks. Cloth coverings can be laundered if soiled and should be laundered daily. CDC guidelines state that a washing machine should suffice in properly washing a face covering.
5. To remove a face covering, hold the straps located at the back of your head and remove it carefully ensuring you **do not touch** the front of the covering.



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- a. Discard immediately in a designated secured bin.
- b. Next, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water.
- c. Then, wash your face thoroughly with soap and warm water.

Cloth coverings provide a barrier to help prevent exposure and transmission of COVID-19 from a person who is unknowingly exposed and asymptomatic to others. They are not intended to protect the wearer. Using a face covering is **not an option** for ill employees. A suspected or ill employee should immediately report to their supervisor and follow all current illness policies or guidelines. The employee should leave the facility to maintain a healthy work environment and prevent disease transmission.

Disease Transmission and Social Distancing

The CDC, World Health Organization (WHO), Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) continue to advise the public that COVID-19 **cannot be transmitted through the procurement or consumption of food.**

It is transmitted through direct person-to-person contact or community transmission.

The virus is currently spread through aerosolization of respiratory droplets. Although droplets can be produced by speaking, they are more likely to travel up to six feet when a person coughs or sneezes.

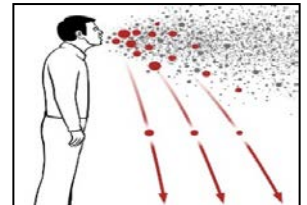


Photo credit: npr.org

The CDC recommends wearing face coverings due to evidence that asymptomatic individuals can unknowingly transmit the virus to others. Those infected can be contagious two days before the onset of symptoms while other individuals may remain asymptomatic and still be contagious during the 14-day incubation period for COVID-19.

Face coverings are **not** a substitute for social distancing compliance.

Social distancing is a critical public health measure implemented to help prevent the risk of transmission. The CDC and WHO states that everyone **must** continue to engage in social distancing and stay at least six feet away from another person due to the route of transmission.

Additional Guidance

- [SECDEF Memorandum 05APR20: Department of Defense Guide on use of cloth face coverings](#)
- [NAVADMIN: 100/20: NAVY GUIDANCE ON THE USE OF FACE COVERINGS](#)
- [Use of DIY Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19 \(CDC\)](#)
- [CDC Recommendation Regarding the Use of Cloth Face Coverings, Especially in Areas of Significant Community-Based Transmission](#)
- [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to COVID-19 \(CDC\)](#)
- [OSHA Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)