

# FAQ

## Use of Face Coverings Indoors & In Workplaces

Health Officer Order No. 21-06

(Effective Date: 8/3/21; Updated 12/8/21)



### 1. Who is required to wear a face covering while in an indoor public setting?

- a. This Health Officer's Face Covering Order applies to fully vaccinated and not fully vaccinated residents and visitors in Alameda County.
- b. Regardless of vaccination status, face coverings must be worn over the mouth and nose in all indoor public settings, venues, gatherings, and workplaces, including but not limited to: offices (including cubicles), retail stores, shopping centers, restaurants and bars, theaters, family entertainment centers, conference and event centers, and State and local government offices serving the public.

### 2. When does the requirement for all individuals to wear a face covering indoors take effect?

The effective date of this Health Officer Order is 12:01 a.m. on Tuesday, August 3, 2021. This Order was updated on December 8, 2021 to align with updates the State made to their face covering requirements for K-12 schools.

### 3. Does this apply in workplaces?

Yes. Regardless of vaccination status, all persons (employees, customers, visitors) in Alameda County are required to wear a face covering when indoors in workplaces and when indoors in public settings, with limited exemptions. Workplaces include offices that aren't open to the general public.

Businesses, hosts, and others responsible for the operation of indoor public settings must:

- Require all patrons to wear face coverings for all indoor settings, regardless of their vaccination status
- Post clearly visible and easy-to-read signage at all entry points for indoor settings to communicate the masking requirements to all patrons.

### 4. What are the exemptions?

You are not required to wear face coverings in the following circumstances:

- While working alone in a closed office or room;
- While actively eating and/or drinking;
- While swimming or showering in a fitness facility;
- While actively engaged in water-based sports and where masks create imminent risk to health in indoor recreational sports, gyms, and fitness classes;
- While obtaining a medical or cosmetic service e.g. facials, piercings, etc. involving the head or face for which temporary removal of the face covering is necessary to perform the service;
- Performers at indoor live events such as theater, opera, symphony, religious choirs, and professional sports may remove masks while actively performing or practicing, though such individuals should maximize physical distancing as much as practicable;
- Participants in indoor religious gatherings may remove masks when necessary to participate in religious rituals;
- Students with medical or behavioral exemptions in a school setting;
- Persons younger than two years old must not wear a mask;
- Persons with a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that prevents wearing a mask. This includes persons with a medical condition for whom wearing a mask could obstruct breathing or who are unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a mask without assistance;



#### 5. What are the exemptions? (cont.)

- Persons who are hearing impaired, or communicating with a person who is hearing impaired, where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication; and
- Persons for whom wearing a mask would create a risk to the person related to their work, as determined by local, state, or federal regulators or workplace safety guidelines.
- Participants in K-12 school or youth recreational or youth recreational sports or K-12 or youth participants using musical instruments in indoor settings where in alignment with:  
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/guidance-for-face-coverings.aspx> and  
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/K-12-Guidance-2021-22-School-Year.aspx>

#### 6. Does this mean that indoor dining at restaurant or bars are not allowed?

Indoor dining is permitted, but employees and patrons must now follow the Health Officer's Order and wear a face covering, with limited exemptions, such as when a patron is actively eating and/or drinking.

#### 7. Am I required to wear a face covering in a private setting?

The Health Officer strongly recommends that fully vaccinated people, as well as unvaccinated and not fully vaccinated persons wear masks in non-public indoor settings when people from multiple households or at higher risk of severe COVID-19 infection are present.

#### 8. As an employer, am I required to continue to follow the Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Prevention Emergency Temporary Standards (ETS)?

Yes. Please visit [Cal/OSHA](#) for employer requirements. Local guidance can be more restrictive than the State's. The Alameda County Health Officer's Indoor Face Covering Order is more stringent than Cal/OSHA's COVID-19 Prevention ETS face covering provision, therefore employers are required to comply with the County's face covering requirement and continue to comply with the other provisions within the Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Prevention ETS.

For more information, please see the [Alameda County Masking Order](#) or visit <https://covid-19.acgov.org/face-masks>.



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