



University of Pittsburgh COVID-19 Standards and Guidelines: Face Coverings, Personal Protective Equipment, and Personal Hygiene

I. Purpose

This document details the University of Pittsburgh's (University) Standards and Guidelines on face coverings, personal protective equipment (PPE), and personal hygiene. These Standards and Guidelines are applied to each of the University's COVID-19 Operational Postures (High Risk, Elevated Risk, and Guarded Risk). More information on these Operational Postures and their Gating Criteria can be accessed at the following website: www.coronavirus.pitt.edu/operational-postures

The Standards and Guidelines outlined below are subject to change as deemed necessary by the Health Care Advisory Group's (HCAG) recommendation to the Senior Leadership Team and approval of the Chancellor. Communication about the University's current Standards and Guidelines will be announced by the Chancellor and posted on the following website: <https://www.coronavirus.pitt.edu/>.

The University will always operate in compliance with federal, state, and local health standards and restrictions, including [Pennsylvania Department of Health guidance](#). The University reserves the right to implement additional health standards and restrictions that reflect the needs of the University and the health, safety, and well-being of its community.

As conditions and circumstances change, this set of standards and guidelines may need to be revised.

II. Scope

The Standards and Guidelines below apply to the entire University, including all University members, campuses, and properties owned by the University or other properties when occupied by the University (e.g., leases).

III. Definitions

- A. Face coverings: Any type of cloth or disposable material that covers the mouth and nose and can be safely secured in place (e.g., looped around ears or around the head) while in use. For the purposes of this guidance, face coverings include masks.

- B. Personal protective equipment (PPE): Equipment worn to minimize exposure to hazards that cause serious workplace injuries and illnesses. These injuries and illnesses may result from contact with chemical, radiological, physical, electrical, mechanical, or other workplace hazards. Personal protective equipment may include items such as gloves, safety glasses and shoes, earplugs or muffs, hard hats, respirators, or coveralls, vests and full body suits.
- C. University member: Refers to all full- and part-time faculty, staff, students, visitors, volunteers, fellows, trainees, and interns on all campuses.

IV. Face Coverings

Face coverings are worn to prevent asymptomatic and symptomatic individuals from spreading viruses, such as COVID-19, to other individuals. Face coverings reduce the volume of respiratory droplets that are expelled during common social interactions and human functions such as talking, breathing, coughing, sneezing, and laughing.

[The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) recommends that everyone wear cloth face coverings when leaving their homes, regardless of whether they have fever or symptoms of COVID-19. This is because of evidence that people with COVID-19 can spread the disease, even when they do not have symptoms. Cloth face coverings may prevent the wearer from spreading respiratory droplets when talking, sneezing, or coughing. Face coverings worn by others may protect a person from getting the virus from someone who is already infected.

Simple cloth face coverings are made from common materials, such as a scarf or bandanna. The cloth face covering should fully cover the mouth and nose and fit snugly against the sides of the face so there are no gaps. Face coverings may be used (and re-used) for as long as possible. Face coverings that become soiled should be laundered if re-usable.

The sections below outline the University's requirements regarding the use of face coverings for each of the University's Operational Postures. Pursuant to [CDC recommendations](#), children under the age of 2 are exempt from the University's face covering requirements. Please see Appendix A for additional guidelines related to face coverings that are applicable across all of the University's Operational Postures. It is important to note that face coverings are not considered PPE. Section V below provides instructions regarding the use of those materials.

A. High Risk Posture

A face covering, which may be cloth or disposable and may be self-supplied and re-used, must be worn in public, on campus, and in campus buildings at all times, except when in an enclosed private, single occupancy space (e.g., private study room or private office) or when in your living space with members of your household or pod. Eating and drinking is only permitted when in an enclosed private, single occupancy space or when in your living space with members of your household or pod.

Face coverings must be worn in single-occupant spaces that others use (e.g., public bathrooms, copier rooms, public study rooms).

Face coverings are required while outdoors, including during exercise, although they may be removed when eating or drinking outdoors. When eating or drinking outdoors individuals must be at least six (6) feet apart, unless those individuals are part of your household or pod.

B. Elevated and Guarded Risk Posture

A face covering, which may be cloth or disposable and may be self-supplied and re-used, must be worn in public, on campus, and in campus buildings at all times, except while eating or drinking in a designated dining area, when in an enclosed private, single occupancy space (e.g., private study room or private office), or when in your living space with members of your household or pod. In indoor campus dining areas, individuals must be least six (6) feet apart unless they are with members of their household or pod.

Face coverings must be worn in single-occupant spaces that others use (e.g., public bathrooms, copier rooms, public study rooms).

Face coverings are required while outdoors, except when eating, drinking or exercising outdoors. Individuals eating, drinking, or exercising without a face covering outdoors must maintain at least six (6) feet of physical distance from others, unless those individuals are part of your household or pod.

V. Personal Protective Equipment

Personal protective equipment (PPE), which include specialized equipment like N95 respirators, surgical masks and gowns will only be necessary for those University members who are told by their supervisor or instructor that PPE is required during the scope of their work, duty, or studies. PPE will not be required to engage in routine activities on campus and in campus facilities. As cloth face coverings remain the recommended protection for members of the general public, the majority of faculty, staff, and students will only need to use face coverings as outlined in Section IV and practice good personal hygiene as outlined in Section VI.

Face coverings, which are discussed in Section IV above, are not PPE, like surgical masks and N95 respirators. A surgical mask is a loose-fitting, disposable device that creates a physical barrier between the mouth and nose of the wearer. If worn properly, a surgical mask is meant to help block large-particle droplets, splashes, sprays, or splatter that may contain germs. An N95 respirator is a respiratory protective device designed to achieve a very close facial fit and very efficient filtration of airborne particles. The edges of the N95 respirator are designed to form a seal around the nose and mouth. Both surgical masks and N95 respirators are in short supply.

They should be reserved for health care workers and medical first responders. The CDC provides [Strategies to Optimize the Supply of PPE and Equipment](#) as well as [FAQs](#) relevant to the use of PPE.

For more specific guidance on PPE, please consult the University's Department of Environmental Health and Safety [Guidance and Use Case Scenarios for Face Coverings and PPE](#).

VI. Personal Hygiene

Personal hygiene is a key element of mitigating the spread of COVID-19 to others and protecting yourself from the virus. The below items outline best personal hygiene practices. These standards and guidelines remain constant for all Operational Postures.

- Skin is an effective barrier against COVID-19. Membranes inside your eyes, nose, and mouth are not effective barriers. If you touch your eyes, nose, or mouth with your hands and your hands have been exposed to the virus, you may become infected. Gloves may or may not be effective in preventing infection, and gloves do not replace good hand hygiene. You can become infected with COVID-19 if you touch an object or surface that was recently contaminated with respiratory droplets containing the virus, or during social/physical contact with other people, and then touch your mouth, nose, or eyes.
- Good hand hygiene includes washing your hands frequently and thoroughly (i.e., between fingers and surfaces of palms) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and then thoroughly drying your hands with a paper towel. If you are unable to wash your hands with soap and water, use antibacterial gel with 70% alcohol and cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until dry.
- Hand hygiene should be practiced as much as possible, and especially before touching your face, before preparing/eating food, after coughing or sneezing, before and after touching high-contact surfaces, and before and after putting on a face covering or mask.
- When sneezing or coughing, cover your nose and mouth with the inner angle of your arm or use a disposable tissue. When at all possible, avoid touching your face, including your mouth, eyes, and nose.

VII. Related Authorities

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) Guidance: Face Coverings](#)
[Pennsylvania Department of Health COVID-19 guidance](#)
[Process to Reopen Pennsylvania](#)
[University's COVID-19 Operational Postures and Gating Criteria](#)
[University's Department of Environmental Health and Safety Guidance and Use Case Scenarios for Face Coverings and PPE](#)

VIII. Contact Information and Public Accessibility

This document is posted on the Office of Policy Development and Management's website and can be found at: <https://www.policy.pitt.edu/university-policies-and-procedures/covid-19-standards-and-guidelines>. For questions related to this document, please contact: Resilience Steering Committee at ResilienceSteeringCommittee@pitt.edu.

Appendix A – Additional Guidelines: Face Coverings, Personal Hygiene, and PPE

- Face coverings are not personal protective equipment (PPE), like surgical masks and N95 respirators. Face coverings may be used (and re-used) for as long as possible. Face coverings that become soiled should be laundered if re-usable or replaced if disposable. *Surgical masks and N95 respirators are in short supply. They should be reserved for health care workers and medical first responders, per [CDC guidance](#).*
- Face covering use is voluntary while you are alone inside your own private office or dorm room.
- Face coverings protect others in case you are unknowingly transmitting COVID-19 before showing symptoms— “my mask protects you; your mask protects me.” Face coverings must cover the nose and mouth to be effective. Use of a face covering does not replace the need to remain six (6) feet away from others; practice good hand hygiene; avoid sitting directly across from others, especially in common spaces, break rooms or eating areas; and other COVID-19 mitigation practices.
- Keep your face covering with you as you would your cell phone and be ready to wear it in any situation in which you are not in control of your space, such as lobbies, elevators, and even outside. When removing your face covering, try to avoid touching your face, eyes, nose, and mouth. Wash or sanitize your hands after removing your face covering.
- Face coverings with one-way valves (e.g., plastic disk on mask) do not protect others. One-way valves allow your breath to be shared with the public, as if you are not wearing a face covering. Face coverings with one-way valves are not an appropriate substitute for a proper face covering or mask and should not be used.
- Use of face coverings is encouraged during any use of public transportation (e.g., bus or train), including ride sharing (e.g., Uber or Lyft), for commuting or traveling to or from campus for any reason.
- Follow this guidance when removing your face covering:
 - Try to avoid touching face, eyes, nose, or mouth, including grasp ear loops or ties.
 - Wash hands after removing face covering or mask.
 - Launder cloth face coverings routinely at home.
- Single-use disposable face coverings can be disposed of in the regular trash.

- There is specific face covering, social distancing, and PPE guidance for particular situations on the [Department of Environmental Health and Safety website](#) for the following:
 - Personal use in laboratories or other areas with established PPE requirements
 - Clinical research
 - Aerosol-generating clinical research procedures
 - Animal procedures, including surgery
 - Tight spaces or close-proximity work activities
 - Interacting with research participants (on campus or off campus)
 - Off-campus studies
 - Arts with singing or brass and woodwind instruments
 - Theater arts