

The following frequently asked questions (FAQs) are intended to assist you with complying with the current State of Michigan Executive Order regarding face coverings as you return to in-person work that is allowed by, or has resumed pursuant to, an applicable order of the Governor. Since the situation is extremely fluid, the below FAQs are subject to change, modification, or rescission at any point and without notice. Additionally, the below are not a substitute for your own general awareness of requirements that may apply to you, as an individual, under the Executive Order or any subsequent or other State order, guidelines, or the like.

What is a face covering, and how is it different from a mask?

A face covering is any kind of generic covering that covers portions of your face. A face covering could be, for example, a mask, a scarf, a bandana, or a handkerchief. A mask is one specific type of face covering.

What is the purpose of a face covering?

Generally speaking, a face covering is a way to protect others from asymptomatic or other spread of the virus. Put another way, face coverings are generally used to protect others from an individual that might be spreading the virus when that individual does not know they have the virus. Face coverings should be the last line of defense against spread of the virus. As such, they are not a substitute for other ways to prevent the spread of the virus, which is why it remains important to maintain social distancing, minimize the duration of contact with other individuals, and practice other health/hygiene recommendations, such as hand washing or use of hand sanitizer, even when wearing a mask.

Am I required to wear a face covering when performing in-person work?

Any individual able to medically tolerate a face covering must wear a covering over his or her nose and mouth—such as a homemade mask, scarf, bandana, or handkerchief—when in any enclosed public space.

At this time, we interpret the Executive Order to require the use of a face covering when you are allowed to be working in-person and you are (1) indoors in a place other than your home and in an area where you cannot self-isolate (e.g., you cannot close the door and expect other individuals not to come into the room) and (2) with other individuals in the same space or where you are likely to encounter another individual.

For example, if you have a single office or lab space and you can close the door and reasonably expect other individuals not to enter, you need not wear a face covering while you are in such location. However, if you leave your office or lab space and proceed into a common area or hallway (even if there are no other individuals present), you should wear a face covering.

Refer to this guidance for more information: [Face Covering Usage for COVID-19 – General Info and Update](#)

For research spaces, refer to this document for more specific information as it pertains to research: [Face Covering Usage for COVID-19 – Research Areas](#)

Do I have to wear my face covering when sitting in my cubicle space?

Generally, yes. However, depending on extenuating factors, including, but not limited to, your inability to medically tolerate a face covering, your status as a critical infrastructure worker or first responder, or if wearing a face covering is incompatible with your work, you may not, at times, be required to wear a face covering.

Can I donate face coverings to healthcare workers?

Yes. Michigan Medicine is accepting homemade masks through their COVID-19 Philanthropic Fund as well as other personal protective equipment (PPE) or other health care items. Visit the [Support Our COVID-19 Response](#) page for more information about how to give.

Can I bring my own face covering to work?

Generally, yes. Pursuant to the Executive Order, homemade face coverings are acceptable to wear when in an enclosed public space. The university, however, reserves the right to restrict the use of homemade masks where and as appropriate. Currently Michigan Medicine does not permit the use of bandanas as a face covering.

Do I need to wear a face covering when I am working outside for the university?

The Executive Order requires that any individual able to medically tolerate a face covering must wear a covering over his or her nose and mouth—such as a homemade mask, scarf, bandana, or handkerchief—when in any enclosed public space. “Enclosed” generally refers to an indoor location. Accordingly, and generally speaking, you need not wear a face covering when you are working outside unless the university has adopted other, more stringent, guidelines. To that end, the university recommends that you wear a face covering outdoors if you cannot, or may be unable to, maintain social distancing (6 feet) from others.

If I wear a mask, do I have to maintain social distancing?

Yes. Face coverings will help to slow the spread of the virus, but they should be the last line of defense. Other preventive measures, including social distancing and minimizing the duration of contact time with others, need to be maintained even while wearing a face covering.

Is the university required to provide me with a face covering? Are departments responsible for providing these?

Yes, pursuant to the Executive Order, departments are responsible for providing non-medical grade face coverings for all workers that perform in-person work that is allowed to be conducted under the Executive Order. U-M Procurement is working on providing additional information for departments regarding procurement of these face coverings.

I am performing a task that requires respiratory protection above and beyond a face covering, and I have been previously medically cleared, fit tested and trained on such protection. Should I wear that respiratory protection or am I required to wear a face covering instead?

If the task requires protection above and beyond the use of a face covering, and you have previously been medically cleared, fit tested, and trained on such respiratory protection, you should wear the respiratory protection as indicated for the task. In all other instances of performing allowed, in-person work, you should follow all other guidance on wearing a face covering.

As a supervisor, can I assign my staff to wear N95s as face coverings for COVID-19?

Pursuant to the Executive Order, the use of N95s should generally be reserved for healthcare workers, first responders and critical infrastructure workers, unless an N95 is otherwise indicated for the task. The required use of any respirator, including N95s, requires medical screening, fit testing and training. If an individual has been assigned an N95 and has completed all the requirements to use the N95, then they may wear an N95 to meet the face covering requirement. However, again, the Executive Order indicates that all N95s and surgical masks should generally be reserved for situations where an N95 is required or for healthcare workers, first responders and critical infrastructure workers.

As a supervisor, what should I do if an employee refuses to wear a face covering in situations where it is required? Or says that they cannot medically tolerate wearing a face covering?

The first step is to have a discussion with the employee to explain that face coverings are now required to be worn as indicated by the State of Michigan executive order unless there is a medical reason that prohibits the use.

If the employee states they have a medical reason for not wearing one, they must provide documentation from a medical professional to Work Connections just like any other restriction. They can be sent home using their own PTO until documentation is received, evaluated by work connections, and a determination is made.

Can I wear a face shield instead of a face covering?

No. A face shield is not a suitable substitute for a face covering. They can be worn as additional protection in conjunction with a face covering but do not meet the requirement for wearing a face covering alone. They are recommended to be worn with a face covering in situations where social distancing cannot be achieved for a specific task and workers may be within 3 feet of each other.