

<b>HARVARD</b> CAMPUS SERVICES  ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & SAFETY	<b>COVID-19</b>  <u><b>Face Coverings: General Use</b></u>	
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<i>The information that informs this document is updated frequently. Please check back regularly for revisions.</i>		

Face coverings are recommended by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and required in public in Massachusetts, with additional requirements in local areas such as Cambridge and Somerville, when social distancing is not possible.

### General Use Face Coverings

These face coverings provide source control and protect other people from possible infectious droplets that might be generated by the wearer. This is particularly important as people are capable of spreading the SARS-COV-2 virus without showing symptoms. General use face coverings are not considered Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Until further notice, while on campus students, faculty, staff, and visitors must wear an appropriate face covering. Those who cannot wear a face covering per CDC guidelines are encouraged to work with their Manager and HR to identify alternative options.



*Option 1:*

*Disposable Surgical "Style" Face Covering*



*Option 2:*

*Reusable Cloth Face Covering*



### Face coverings should be:

- Multi-layered and comprised of a minimum of 2 layers (disposable should be 3-layers with an inner hygroscopic layer, a middle filtration layer, and an outer water-resistant layer)
- Latex-free
- Contain ear loops, ties, or other mechanisms to fit snugly on the bottoms and sides of the face and over the wearer's nose and mouth
- Allow for breathing without restriction
- Not rated for medical settings
- Free of valves and similar openings (a valve defeats the purpose of a face covering since it allows the wearer to breath out potentially contaminated respiratory droplets)

### Instructions for Use

- Wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water before putting on or taking off your face covering.
- Change out/replace face covering if it becomes wet or soiled.
- Cloth face coverings should be laundered with detergent and machine dried. Additional information on cloth face coverings can be found in the [Cloth Face Coverings Supplement](#) of the Face Coverings/Masks/Respirators: Selection & Procurement guide.

### Additional Information

“General use” applies to faculty, staff, students, or visitors who must wear a face covering for source control on Harvard’s premises. PPE typically supersedes the need for general face coverings, those issued with PPE will receive the necessary training and information. For questions, see your Manager/Supervisor.

Surgical/procedural masks are medical grade masks and should only be worn by medical professionals or those with specified job-related safety protocols. These masks are in short supply and should be reserved for medical professionals, wherever possible. The American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) specifies performance standards for surgical masks that account primarily for the resistance of the mask material to



body fluids typical in healthcare and dental settings. Such fluid resistance is not needed for general use by non-healthcare workers in an office or laboratory setting. Massachusetts and CDC guidance discourages the use of medical grade surgical masks and N95 respirators by non-healthcare workers unless required for a specific job function due to the shortage of those items.

Neither face coverings nor most medical grade surgical masks protect the wearer from infectious aerosols generated by other nearby people. Where such personal protective equipment is needed (e.g., when clinicians conduct procedures such as intubation on infected patients), N95 respirators are typically required.

With this information in mind, personnel who do not work in a healthcare setting or under another specific procedure (i.e. Harvard EPH Environmental Control Procedures) should wear face coverings that are not ASTM-rated.

## References

- [ASTM: Standards for Medical Face Masks and Protective Clothing](#), Retrieved May 26, 2020
- [CDC: Important Information About Your Cloth Face Coverings](#), Retrieved May 26, 2020
- [Massachusetts: Wear a Mask in Public](#), Retrieved May 26, 2020