

Statement on Face Covering Effectiveness for K-12 Schools



Universal and correct use of face coverings keeps kids learning in-person

Evidence from the past year makes clear that in-person school is crucial in supporting the social-emotional health of students and their families.⁶ Face coverings increase the likelihood that students will be able to stay in school by reducing the risk of exposure and transmission of COVID-19.

Face coverings help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in schools

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) presents a collection of studies that illustrate the effectiveness of face coverings at preventing COVID-19 transmission in multiple settings, including schools.¹ Several different studies in schools have found that with the implementation of comprehensive preventive strategies, including universal use of face covering, there is very low COVID-19 transmission in schools even with high levels of transmission in the community.^{2,3,4,5} Another study documented the impact of universal face coverings in a salon. Two hair stylists who were COVID-19 positive and symptomatic had close contact with 139 patrons. No COVID-19 infections were reported by the 67 patrons available for follow-up.

The virus that causes COVID-19 is mainly spread through respiratory droplets and aerosols that float and hang in the air. These droplets are generated when someone with COVID-19 coughs, sneezes, sings, talks, shouts, or breathes. Individuals with COVID-19 who feel well and do not have symptoms can transmit enough virus-laden respiratory droplets to infect others. Over half of COVID-19 transmissions are estimated to be caused by individuals who are asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic and do not know they are spreading COVID-19.

Face coverings protect the wearer, and those around them

Face coverings protect the wearer from both getting and giving COVID-19. Multi-layer face coverings do a great deal to limit the release of droplets and aerosols, when worn properly over the nose and mouth. Simulations have demonstrated that cloth face coverings can prevent 50-70% of exhaled respiratory particles.¹ In addition, face coverings prevent droplets and aerosols from traveling as far. Face coverings also protect the wearer from inhaling most droplets and

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/science-briefs/masking-science-sars-cov2.html>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7012e4.htm>

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7012e3.htm>

⁴ <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7012e2.htm>

⁵ <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7011a2.htm>

⁶ <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7011a1.htm>

⁷ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7680614/>

⁸ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)31142-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)31142-9/fulltext)

⁹ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33205991/>

¹⁰ <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/5/4/e006577>

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some aerosols.⁸

Face coverings made from cloth with high thread counts and materials that generate static electricity, such as polypropylene, are the most effective at filtering out droplets and aerosols. In addition, improving the fit of the face covering by using mask fitters, nylon hosiery sleeves, layering a medical mask under a cloth face covering, and knotting-and-tucking ear loops can increase protection.

Face coverings are safe for people of all ages

Face coverings have been demonstrated to be safe for people of all ages, including those with lung disease. Studies have shown that individuals who wear face coverings both when at rest or when physically active experience no physiological changes, including no change in oxygen or carbon dioxide levels, even if experiencing shortness of breath.¹ There is also no evidence that face coverings increase the chance of transmitting or contracting COVID-19.

While some studies questioned the effectiveness of face coverings for reducing the spread of COVID-19, they have since been retracted⁷ or their conclusions questioned^{9, 10} due to significant methodological flaws.¹

Face coverings prevent COVID-19 infections, hospitalizations and deaths

Eight studies conducted in the United States, in addition to studies conducted internationally, have definitively shown that universal use of face coverings is associated with a reduction in COVID-19 infections. Universal use of face coverings is also linked with a reduction in COVID-related hospitalizations and deaths.¹

The studies in school settings demonstrate that universal use of face coverings helps to keep schools open.