



Arkansas Department of Health

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Governor Asa Hutchinson
José R. Romero, MD, Secretary of Health

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Effective July 20, 2020

Modified August 26, 2020

Face Coverings Directive

The Secretary of Health, in consultation with the Governor, has sole authority over all instances of quarantine, isolation, and restrictions on commerce and travel throughout Arkansas, as necessary and appropriate to control disease in the state of Arkansas as authorized by Ark. Code Ann. §20-7-109—110 and the Rules and Regulations Pertaining to Reportable Disease (2019). Based on available scientific evidence, it is necessary and appropriate to take further action to ensure that COVID-19 remains controlled and that residents and visitors in Arkansas remain safe.

The Secretary of Health issues this Directive in conjunction with Executive Order 20-43, which ordered a public health directive, which was issued pursuant to the on-going public health emergency as declared in Executive Order 20-37. The Secretary of Health requires every person in Arkansas to wear a face covering completely over the mouth and nose in all indoor environments, excluding private residences, where they are exposed to non-household members and distancing of six (6) feet or more cannot be assured and in all outdoor settings, excluding private residences, where there is exposure to non-household members, unless there exists ample space of six (6) feet or more to practice physical distancing.

The following shall be exempt from wearing a face covering

- a. Persons younger than 10 years of age (This requirement shall not supersede any decision by the Secretary of Education, public school district, or private school to require masks for children younger than 10 years of age while attending school);
- b. Persons with a medical condition or disability that prevents wearing a face covering;
- c. Persons performing job duties where a six feet distance is not achievable, but a mask is inhibitory to the ability to safely and effectively perform the job duty;
- d. Persons participating in athletic activities where a six feet distance is not achievable, but a mask is inhibitory to the activity or active exercise;
- e. Persons consuming food or drink;
- f. Persons driving alone or with passengers from the driver's household;

- g. Persons receiving services that require access to the face for security, surveillance, or other purposes may temporarily remove a face covering while receiving those services;
- h. Persons voting, assisting voters, serving as poll watchers, or actively performing election administration duties; however, face coverings are strongly encouraged;
- i. Persons engaged in religious worship activities; however, face coverings are strongly encouraged;
- j. Persons giving a speech or performance for broadcast or to an audience; however, those persons shall safely distance from nearby individuals;
- k. Persons in counties where the Department of Health has certified that risk of community transmission of COVID-19 is low. To be considered low risk, the county must not have a newly identified case of COVID-19 for twenty-eight (28) consecutive days, assuming there has been adequate testing in the county.

This directive, effective July 20, 2020, should be read in conjunction with the previously issued directives addressing particular activities and venues.

A face covering completely covering the mouth and nose can be purchased commercially, a mask with an ASTM rating of at least Level 1, or homemade using at least two layers of material. Please see [CDC Considerations for Wearing Face Coverings](#) for more information. Masks with valves are not allowed. Bandanas and single-layer neck gaiters¹ (a form of mask made out of stretchy, moisture-wicking fabric that is worn around the neck and pulled up over the nose and mouth) may not provide sufficient protection and are strongly discouraged. Bandanas and gaiters may be doubled to provide two layers of protection.

¹ <https://advances.sciencemag.org/content/advances/early/2020/08/07/sciadv.abd3083.full.pdf>