

Frequently asked questions for wearing face masks outdoors

Do I need to wear a face covering while outdoors?

Yes, in most cases. As the operative Executive Order states, “face coverings are not required for people who can easily, continuously, and measurably maintain at least six (6) feet of distance from other people.” When you’re going outside, bring a face covering. Keep a six-foot distance away from other people or groups, whether you’re wearing a face covering or not. If you cannot stay six feet apart, wear a face covering. A face covering is not required when you can easily, continuously, and measurably stay at least six feet apart from other people.

Do my children need to wear face coverings outdoors?

In some instances. Children under the age of two years should **not** wear face coverings. The Executive Order states that face coverings are not required of “young children who may not be able to effectively wear a mask.” Children who can wear a face covering safely should do so. However, as is the case with adults, a face covering is not required when children can easily, continuously, and measurably stay at least six feet apart from other people.

Do I need to wear a face covering at Rhode Island beaches?

While at the beach, it is recommended that you wear a face covering in any crowded area – for example, boardwalks, restrooms, changing rooms, concession stands, or parking lots during busy times. However, face coverings are not required when you are easily, continuously, and measurably at least six feet from others. Face coverings should not be worn while swimming or playing in the water.

Do I need to wear a face covering while swimming?

No. Face coverings should not be worn while swimming or playing in the water.

Do I need to wear a face covering while visiting Rhode Island parks?

Yes, in most cases. A face covering needs to be worn in all public places where you are close to other people and cannot easily, continuously, and measurably stay six feet apart from people in other groups. The clearest advice is to keep six feet away from other people or groups, whether you’re wearing a face covering or not. If you cannot keep a six-foot distance, wear a face covering. For example, if you’re hiking and no one else is on the trail, you don’t need to wear your face covering, but if you’re beginning a hike and on a crowded trailhead, you should wear a face covering. Similarly, if you’re having a picnic with your family, you don’t need to wear a face covering, but if you’re waiting in a line at a food truck or concession stand where other people are within six feet of you, you should wear a face covering.

Am I required to wear face coverings while jogging, bicycling, or exercising outdoors?

Yes, face coverings are recommended while exercising outdoors if you cannot stay six feet apart from other people or groups. As always, check with your doctor before starting an exercise program. While exercising in a face covering, moderate your expectations. You may need to go a little slower while you get used to the mask. Stop or take a break more often.

Also, if children are engaged in sports outdoors, face coverings are suggested but may not always be appropriate given a child's health, stage of development, or activity. Adults should monitor youth who wear face coverings while taking part in sports activities and encourage youth to take more frequent breaks.

Are there exceptions for Rhode Islanders with developmental disabilities or medical conditions?

Yes. The Executive Order states: "Face coverings shall not be required of those who are developmentally unable to comply" or "those whose health would be damaged" by wearing a face covering.