

# Face Coverings

The University wants to help campus community members remain healthy, and so it is providing the following guidance on face coverings.

## Overview

Face coverings must be worn by all members of the campus community when on URI property, whether indoors or outdoors, unless doing so would damage their health. Students may remove their masks when in their dorm rooms but must wear their masks elsewhere. Employees may remove their mask while working alone in their assigned office or solo workspace but must wear them at all other times.

Given the unique challenges of our higher education environment, some aspects of these guidelines exceed the minimum requirements of Rhode Island Executive Order 20-24. All members of the campus community must comply with the University's guidelines as provided herein. Individuals will not be admitted to University-controlled buildings or University events without face coverings.

**NOTE:** For purposes of these URI requirements, the term "visitors" includes faculty, staff, students, affiliates, visitors, vendors/contractors, and all others who are not current students or employees of the University.

## Types of face coverings

Please note the following general guidance regarding use of face coverings, surgical masks, and N95 respirators:

- A **cloth face covering** is typically a reusable item made from cloth fabric. It serves to protect others from exposure to illnesses the wearer may be carrying. This is the appropriate protection for most community members and should be laundered in a washing machine daily after use. Based on recent studies, it is strongly recommended that you avoid using gaiters/buffs as your face covering and opt for a sewn cloth mask with three layers for increased protection for you and your fellow URI community members.
- A **disposable surgical mask** is a disposable face covering approved for health care environments. These are generally reserved for health care workers and emergency responders but may be used by other individuals as a temporary measure when cloth face coverings are not available.
- An **N95 respirator** is a device evaluated, tested and approved to reduce the wearer's exposure to fine particles, and is the respiratory protection of choice for units dealing with COVID-19 patients. An N95 respirator is tight fitting and must be fit-tested. N95 respirators are not appropriate or necessary for most employees and should be reserved for health care workers and emergency responders in contact with individuals who are ill and are also needed by facilities maintenance personnel while performing specific tasks that generate fine dust. NOTE: An N95 respirator with an exhaust valve is not suitable for preventing transmission of COVID-19 and is not an acceptable face covering for purposes of this policy.

## Obtaining face coverings

**Students** should bring their own cloth face coverings from home, or they may obtain masks by contacting their hall director, house manager (Greek housing), employer (student employees), or Health Services.

**Employees** will be provided a package of 5 reusable cloth face coverings by their supervisor upon request. University departments may obtain these face coverings through the COVID-19 Task Force. More information is available [here](#).

**Visitors** to Kingston Campus may obtain disposable surgical masks at the Welcome Center or from the individual department they are visiting.

All students and employees who are issued reusable cloth masks are responsible for washing them daily (see below).

## Use and care of face coverings

### Putting on the face covering/disposable mask

- Wash hands or use hand sanitizer prior to handling the face covering/disposable mask.
- Ensure the face-covering/disposable mask fits over the nose and under the chin.
- Situate the face-covering/disposable mask properly with nose wire snug against the nose (where applicable).
- Tie straps behind the head and neck or loop around the ears.
- Throughout the process: Avoid touching the front of the face covering/disposable mask.

### Taking off the face covering/disposable mask

- Use hand sanitizer.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth when removing the face covering/disposable mask.
- When taking off the face covering/disposable mask, loop your finger into the strap and pull the strap away from the ear, or untie the straps.
- Wash hands immediately after removing.

### Care, storage and laundering

- Keep face coverings/disposable masks stored in a paper bag when not in use.
- Cloth face coverings may not be used more than one day at a time and must be washed after use. Cloth face coverings should be properly laundered with regular clothing detergent before first use, and after each shift. Cloth face coverings should be replaced immediately if soiled, damaged (e.g. ripped, punctured) or visibly contaminated.
- Disposable masks must not be used for more than one day and should be placed in the trash after your shift or if it is soiled, damaged (e.g., stretched ear loops, torn or punctured material) or visibly contaminated.

## Exceptions to requirements for face coverings

Such protective face coverings are not required for certain individuals, per CDC guidance, or for:

- Anyone for whom use of such face covering would be damaging to his or her health; or

- Anyone who is developmentally unable to use such face covering, including young children who may not be able to effectively wear a face mask; or
- When a face covering would inhibit an activity of daily living (e.g. eating); or
- When a face covering would itself negatively impact the safety of an individual or lead to an increased risk of harm to others (e.g. near open flames); or
- Face coverings are not required in settings where people can easily and continuously maintain at least 6 feet of distance from other people.

If **dining** on campus, you should wear your mask or face covering until you are ready to eat and then replace it afterward. Individuals must maintain 6 feet of physical distance while eating.

For certain approved **fitness and athletic activities**, face coverings may be removed provided individuals maintain 14 feet of physical distance.

For approved **musical and theatrical performances**, performers may remove face coverings provided they maintain 14 feet of physical distance from each other and the audience. NOTE: This does not apply to lectures or teaching environments.

During **public speaking engagements**, the speaker may remove their mask while speaking provided they maintain 14 feet of physical distance from others. NOTE: This does not apply to lectures or teaching environments.

Faculty seeking exceptions based on **pedagogical needs** may submit a request to their college dean, who must agree to the exception and then obtain approval from the Vice Provost for Academic Personnel and Budget.

Employees that require more extensive facial coverings due to industry specific safety regulations, laws or guidelines should continue to comply with the PPE requirements outlined within their respective industry-specific laws, regulations, and guidelines (i.e. medical professionals, professionals who use respiratory equipment, and professionals who handle hazardous waste.) Any exceptions to face covering requirements for researchers must be approved by the Office of Research Integrity and incorporated in that researcher's laboratory safety plan.

## Reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities

**Students** who are unable to wear a face covering due to a medical condition should request a reasonable accommodation through URI Health Services [patient portal](#) and complete the COVID request for accommodation. A committee, consisting of Health Services and Disability Student Services will review each request and work with the student to develop a strategy for the health and wellbeing of the student and the URI community.

**Employees** who are unable to wear face coverings due to a medical condition should request a reasonable accommodation through Human Resources. More information can be found [here](#).