



Masks: Recommendations for School Nutrition Employees

APRIL 6, 2020

Background

Public health officials have revised their previous guidelines that discouraged non-health workers from wearing masks. Now there is evidence to suggest that masks may help prevent the public from being infected with COVID-19. Nevertheless, because the availability of medical-grade masks is critically low, there is a legitimate concern that a recommendation to wear masks would take away from the supply for healthcare workers. As such, the new recommendation to wear masks applies **only** to cloth and non-medical masks.

Regulation or Recommendation?

Currently, there is NO evidence to suggest that COVID-19 can be transmitted through food. Thus, food workers are NOT required to wear masks when preparing or serving food. Strong adherence to and enforcement of Employee Health Policies and proper hand hygiene/glove usage are the primary means by which food handlers can protect the public from any disease transmitted through food.

To help prevent person-to-person transmission of COVID-19, it is recommended that School Nutrition Employees wear a mask while in the workplace and when delivering meals.

Key Points

- Masks should be cloth face coverings and not surgical or N-95 masks. Surgical and N-95 masks are critical supplies that must be reserved for healthcare workers.
- Before putting on a face covering, clean hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizer or soap and water.
- Avoid touching the face covering while using it; if you do, clean your hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizer or soap and water.
- Be careful not to touch your eyes, nose, and mouth when putting on or removing the face covering.
- Cloth face coverings should:
 - fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face
 - be secured with ties or ear loops
 - include multiple layers of fabric
 - allow for breathing without restriction
 - be washed daily with detergent and hot water and dried on a hot cycle
 - be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape

Additional Information

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Use of Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19*. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html> (This resource includes tutorials for making your own face covering)
- World Health Organization. *Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) advice for the public: When and how to use masks*. Available at: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/when-and-how-to-use-masks>