

# Select Board Guidance on Required Use of Face Coverings in Public

*“An Infection of One, Is an Infection of All”*

The Brookline Select Board issues this Guidance on the Health Department Advisory of April 14, 2020 (the “Health Department Advisory”) that *“Effective April 17, 2020, every individual is required to wear a protective face covering at all times when in public.”*

\* \* \*

- 1. COVID-19 Kills!** To prevent unnecessary deaths, especially of the elderly and people with serious health conditions, the Brookline Select Board urges all Brookline residents to **stay home to save lives**; except for occasionally going outside to perform essential tasks (unless you have symptoms in which case you should not go outside your home). We cannot exactly define what essential tasks include, but we do expect each person to use good judgment, taking into consideration the deadly-seriousness of the COVID-19 crisis in deciding whether they need to go out and about. **When you do go outside, you must wear a face covering and follow the advice in this Guidance.**
- 2. Why We Require Face Coverings Now.** Recent studies have shown that a significant portion of individuals with the COVID-19 virus lack symptoms and can transmit the virus to others before showing symptoms. This means that the virus can spread between people interacting in close proximity in many settings. Accordingly, the Centers for Disease Control (“CDC”) and the Brookline Health Director are advising people to wear a cloth face covering to cover their nose and mouth when in public or in any setting where social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. **This is primarily to protect people around you if you are infected but do not have symptoms.** By preventing the transmission of the virus by people who are asymptomatic, we can quickly reduce the transmission rate to below one transmission per infected person, which will result in containment of the virus and a quicker return to normal.
- 3. Types of Appropriate Face Covering to Wear.** Surgical masks and N95 respirators are in short supply and should be reserved for healthcare workers or other medical first responders. Other people should use consumer marketed face masks or cloth face coverings fashioned from household items or common materials available at low cost. Face covering should (i) fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face and cover your nose and mouth, (ii) be secured with ties or ear loops, (iii) include multiple layers of fabric, (iv) allow for breathing without restriction, and (v) be able to be laundered and dried without damage or change in shape. Such face coverings have been shown to significantly reduce the amount of virus carrying droplets or aerosol sprays from a sneeze, a cough, or talking.
- 4. When to Wear Face Coverings.** Face coverings should be worn **whenever you are in public** or in any setting where social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. A face covering should be worn but is not required when you are (i) alone inside or alone outside and far from other people (i.e., based on recent studies, 20 to 25 feet away is a good guide – see below), (ii) riding or driving in an enclosed personal vehicle, or (iii) with other members of your household who do not have symptoms of the virus or were not recently exposed to the virus.
- 5. Face Covering Cautions for Children and People with Health Conditions.** Cloth face coverings or masks should not be placed on children younger than 2 years of age, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the face covering or mask without assistance.
- 6. Face Covering Hygiene.** You should have multiple cloth face coverings or washable consumer marketed face masks. They should be taken off and washed with warm soapy water after each use, which will destroy the lipids (fat cells) on the membrane of the virus much like handwashing washes away dirt and germs.

7. **Social Distancing Still Required When Wearing a Face Covering.** Even when wearing a face covering you should maintain social distancing to protect others and to protect yourself from others. Six feet is the range of most coughs that can spread COVID-19 virus droplets. But recent studies suggest that aerosols sprays of the virus can travel 3 or more times that length. Thus, it is important to keep as much distance as possible between you and others in public, especially from persons not wearing a face covering or not properly wearing one.
8. **Healthy Outdoor Exercise.** Getting out for reasonable periods of exercise for cardiovascular and general health reasons, including mental health, is not prohibited. But when you are out in public walking, running, or biking, this Guidance is especially important. Also important is selecting routes for your exercise that are not crowded. So, for example, instead of Coolidge Corner, you should use side streets with little traffic.
9. **Enforcement Measures.** Brookline’s Police Department should not be seen as the public health police to enforce the Health Department Advisory. **Do Not Call 911** or the regular Police Department phone number to report someone not wearing a face covering. The initial enforcement focus of the Police and other Town bodies will be education. We also expect that the community will evolve a culture of wearing face coverings to protect each other from the COVID-19 virus and thereby exert peer pressure on people around them. Of course, further enforcement actions may be necessary if voluntary compliance is failing to provide the safety that we need. The Health Department Advisory, however, requires essential businesses to enforce the wearing of face coverings by their employees and customers. Businesses not adhering to these requirements may face fines or, in egregious cases, the Health Department may shut down a business, construction site, or other activity.
10. **Send a Strong Message to Others by Wearing Your Face Covering in Public.** When more people are seen wearing face coverings, the message will get around that a face covering is the norm and everyone should wear one. This cultural shift will play a major role in containing the virus.
11. **Inconvenience of Wearing Face Coverings?** Following the advice in this Guidance will entail some inconvenience, but the inconvenience **is not unreasonably burdensome** and will help keep you, your family, the people around you in public, and the community safe and healthy. And following the advice in this Guidance will hasten the time that the COVID-19 virus can be contained and we can begin to return to normal.

\* \* \*

CDC fact sheet, *“Use of Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19”* with helpful illustrations of how to easily and inexpensively make cloth face coverings can be found at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/DIY-cloth-face-covering-instructions.pdf>