

Masking Mandate FAQ

Why are masks required on the field of play?

The Commonwealth of PA issued a masking order on November 17, 2020 and revised it on November 23, 2020 that requires all Pennsylvanians to wear a mask when indoors or outdoors and not with the members of their household and they cannot sustain the appropriate physical distance.

What is sustained physical distance?

Sustained physical distance means the practice of staying at least six feet away from others to avoid becoming a **close contact**. On October 21, 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated its definition of close contact to ***"someone who was within six feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period."*** The guidance goes on to note that *there are additional factors to consider* when defining "close contact." DOH recommends using 15 consecutive minutes of exposure at a distance of six feet or less as an operational definition for "close contact." *However, there are circumstances when someone should be considered a close contact of a case after being within six feet for fewer than 15 consecutive minutes.* Additional factors that should be considered when assessing close contacts include but are not limited to close proximity to an infected person, infected person exhibiting symptoms, and environmental conditions like crowds or inadequate ventilation.

How long will masks be required?

Masks will be required until the Commonwealth of PA removes the requirement for athletes to wear masks while on the field.

What happens if I don't wear a mask?

The wearing of a face covering, such as a mask, helps us as a society to limit the spread of COVID-19 and successfully combat this pandemic; therefore, it is in everyone's best interest that all Pennsylvanians comply with this Order.

As this is a legal Order under the Disease Prevention and Control Law, ***law enforcement officers are authorized to issue warnings or citations*** to anyone who does not comply with the Order. The Department of Health can also issue warnings and citations to businesses, persons, facilities, and organizations that do not comply.

Does the Order apply to athletes and sports activities?

Yes. Everyone who participates in sport activities including coaches, athletes (including cheerleaders), and spectators must wear a face covering, such as a mask, unless they fall under an exception in Section 3 of the Order.

Indoors: Coaches, athletes (including cheerleaders), and spectators must wear face coverings, when indoors and where another person or persons who are not members of the individual's household are present in the same space, irrespective of physical distance. This includes while actively engaged in workouts, competition, and on the sidelines, etc.

Outdoors: Coaches, athletes (including cheerleaders), and spectators must wear face coverings if they cannot maintain sustained physical distance from persons outside of their household. This includes while actively engaged in workouts, competition, and on the sidelines, in the

dugout, etc. If sustained six-foot distancing can be maintained, face coverings may be removed when outdoors.

How will it be enforced at the game?

Masks will be considered part of a player's mandatory equipment to participate like matching uniforms, shin guards, and appropriate footwear as checked by the referees during pregame.

What happens if a player isn't wearing a mask?

Players not wearing a mask will not be permitted to participate.

Can an athlete remove their mask during play?

If an athlete is at a sustained distance from the other athletes, the player may lower their mask until play approaches leading to an elimination of sustained distance.

Can an athlete remove their mask during play if the mask causes a medical condition, including respiratory issues that impede breathing?

Yes, the Order provides an exception in section 3 that provides that if wearing a face covering would either cause a medical condition, or exacerbate an existing one, including respiratory issues that impede breathing, a mental health condition or a disability. The order indicates all alternatives to wearing a face covering, including the use of a face shield, should be exhausted before an individual is excepted from this Order.

Using football as an example, wearing a mask in addition to a mouth guard and a helmet would likely create a medical issue for the athlete whether the athlete is a professional or youth player even if a previous medical issue was not present. For example, the CDC says that "wearing a mask with these types of protective equipment is not safe if it makes it hard to breathe." There are other sports where there are similar concerns that a mask would create a medical issue where one would otherwise not exist in an athlete. For example, it should also be obvious that wearing a mask while swimming presents an imminent health issue.

According to Section 3, the athlete would be asked to work through alternatives that would reduce or eliminate the respiratory droplets that would impact others in proximity. If the sport, equipment, or exertion level does not allow for face covering to be worn safely then the athlete should not wear a face covering.

There are no exemptions for specific sports, leagues, teams, or levels. We know that some people don't like masks. We are asking everyone to please give this their best effort so we can continue these activities and others as we all unite to fight COVID-19.