

Mask Ordinance FAQ

What is the City of Valdosta's mask requirement?

The City Ordinance requires that face coverings be worn in indoor and outdoor public locations and businesses within the City of Valdosta in order to help slow the spread of COVID-19.

In short, if you are inside or outside at a public place in Valdosta and can't physically or socially distance and do not fall within one of the exceptions listed in the ordinance, you need to wear a mask.

You can read the full text of the ordinance online at Valdostacity.com

What about at a business?

The Ordinance also specifies that businesses that do not consent with the mask ordinance within their facilities post a "clearly legible sign in one-inch Arial font at all public entrances" stating, "*This location does not require the use of masks or facial coverings upon this property.*"

Does this apply in Lowndes County?

Masks are required only within the City of Valdosta boundaries under this ordinance, not unincorporated Lowndes County or other jurisdictions.

When does the mask ordinance go into effect?

This ordinance goes into effect on Thursday, August 26, 2020.

When will the mask ordinance expire?

On August 31, 2020, Governor Brian P. Kemp signed two executive orders extending the Public Health State of Emergency and existing COVID-19 safety measures.

Executive Order 08.31.20.01 extends the Public Health State of Emergency through 11:59 PM on October 10, 2020.

Executive Order 08.31.20.02 continues to require social distancing, bans gatherings of more than fifty people unless there is six feet between each person, outlines mandatory criteria for businesses, and requires sheltering in place for those living in long-term care facilities and the medically fragile, among other provisions. The order runs through 11:59 PM on September 15, 2020.

What are the consequences for not wearing a face covering?

The enforcement of this ordinance is not designed to be punitive. Enforcement will begin with education and may increase to fines, depending on the number of violations.

How will this ordinance be enforced?

Education will be the first step in enforcement. We will work to educate any violators of the ordinance before pursuing further action. Those not in compliance will be asked to provide proof of a mask, and if they do not, will receive a warning on first offense. Additional failure to comply with this ordinance can result in a \$50 citation for individuals.

What defines a mask?

A mask is defined as a covering made of cloth, fabric, or other soft or permeable material, without holes, that covers only the nose and mouth and surrounding areas of the lower face. Masks may be factory-made, or handmade and improvised from ordinary household materials. Household items such as bandanas, towels, t-shirts or any other cotton or linen fabric can be used to make a mask. If choosing to wear a cloth mask, it is recommended that they be made with at least 2 layers of fabric.

Are there exceptions to the requirement?

Yes. They include:

- In personal vehicles or on residential property;
- When a person is alone in enclosed spaces or only with other household members;
- When the individual has a religious objection to wearing a facial covering or mask;
- While drinking or eating;
- When a licensed healthcare provider has determined that wearing a facial covering or mask causes or aggravates a health condition for the individual or when such person has a medical reason for not wearing a facial covering or mask;
- When wearing a facial covering or mask would prevent the receipt of personal services or performing work in the course of employment;
- When complying with the directions of a law enforcement officer or for the purposes of verifying a person's identity, such as when purchasing alcohol, tobacco, or prescription drugs or when engaging in a financial transaction;
- Children under the age of ten (10) years;
- At any polling place and no individual shall be denied ingress or egress to or from a polling place for failure to wear a facial covering or mask;
- When outdoors and maintaining social distancing from anyone other than individuals with whom they cohabitate.

Do I need a doctor's note to prove I have a medical condition that prevents me from wearing a mask?

No, those who cannot wear face coverings due to a medical, mental health, developmental condition, inability to remove the face mask without assistance or anyone who cannot wear face coverings under CDC guidance, do not have to have a doctor's note and are not required to produce one.

What is social distancing?

Maintaining a physical separation of at least 6 feet between people from different households.

If I wear a mask do I still have to social distance?

Yes, social distancing should always be practiced and masks are not a substitute for social distancing. Masks act as an additional layer of protection in slowing the spread of the virus.

Do I have to wear a face mask in my own home?

A face mask is not necessary when in your own home and only with members of your household. If you are hosting a gathering with people from other households, everyone should wear a face mask in order to protect each other from possible exposure to the virus. If you live in a multi-family unit, such as an apartment building, wear a face mask in communal spaces, such as the laundry room and shared hallways.

Are face coverings required while on sidewalks or in parks?

Yes, only if social distancing cannot be achieved.

Are face coverings required when groups of friends get together or at other gatherings?

Yes, if the gathering is not at an individual's home and people in the group are not members of the same household and social distancing cannot be achieved.

Do I have to wear a face covering in my car?

No, face coverings are not required while inside a personal vehicle. It is recommended to wear a face covering if you cannot maintain six feet of physical distancing between you and someone who is not a member of your household.

Where can I get a face covering?

Face coverings are widely available at retailers in the City of Valdosta. You can also use a bandana, scarf or piece of fabric as a face covering. Here is information from the Centers for Disease Control on how to make and wear face coverings: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-make-cloth-facecovering.html>.

How do masks prevent the spread of COVID-19?

According to the CDC, cloth face coverings are recommended as a simple barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from traveling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the cloth face covering coughs, sneezes, talks, or raises their voice. This is called source control. COVID-19 spreads mainly among people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet), so the use of cloth face coverings is particularly important in settings where people are close to each other or where social distancing is difficult to maintain.

