



A Union of Professionals

# COVID-19 Resources: Face Shields

## Why We Recommend Them for Essential Workers

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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention now recommends that you cover your mouth and nose with a non-medical mask or cloth face cover when you are in public, for example at the pharmacy or grocery store or conducting other essential business.

But this guidance falls short for our essential workers who remain on the job and have frequent contact with people, and therefore are at elevated risk of exposure. Notable examples include:

- School support workers who are still making and/or distributing food to students in their communities;
- Corrections officers who must be at close quarters with offenders and other staff;
- Social workers or child protection service workers who are still doing home visits in the community; and
- Laboratory workers in higher education who still are required to conduct ongoing research or care for animals.

**The CDC recommendation for cloth face coverings is not enough for our essential workers.** If you're wearing a face mask at work, we recommend that you also wear a face shield. The face shield will provide an extra barrier of protection from exposure to the virus.

- Face shields protect eyes, nose, mouth from contact with splashes and splatters of fluid-borne pathogens. This is especially vital in close proximity.
- The shields protect your face mask from coming in direct contact with virus particles spread through coughing or sneezing, and may extend the life of your mask or disposable respirator.

The shields are made of clear materials and have a shape similar to a welder's mask. These are inexpensive personal protective devices that can be easily cleaned and sanitized and can help to minimize exposures for our essential employees. Here's a short YouTube video that demonstrates how to make your own face shield out of common household items.

**[bit.ly/DIY-FaceShield](https://bit.ly/DIY-FaceShield)**

Find these resources and more at [www.aft.org/coronavirus](http://www.aft.org/coronavirus)

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of 1.7 million professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

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## Tips for reuse of face shields

Your face shield can become potentially contaminated, so take special care to remove and disinfect it at the end of the work-day to protect yourself from being exposed to the virus. Here's how to do that:

- Put on disposable gloves.
- Carefully remove the face shield.
- Inspect the face shield for any damage or tears—discard the face shield if damaged.
- Clean the face shield and apply a mild disinfectant such as isopropyl alcohol or diluted bleach to the shield.
- Dry the face shield and put in a plastic bag you can close; store the shield.
- Apply hand sanitizer to the gloves and carefully remove the gloves.
- Wash your hands.

Follow a similar procedure for a cloth face covering that will be reused. It's a good idea to wash your face covering frequently, ideally after each use, or at least daily. Have a bag or bin to keep cloth face coverings in until they can be laundered with detergent and hot water and dried on a hot cycle. If you must re-wear your cloth face covering before laundering it, wash your hands immediately after putting it back on and avoid touching your face. Discard cloth face coverings that:

- No longer cover the nose and mouth;
  - Have stretched-out or damaged ties or straps;
  - Cannot stay on the face; and
  - Have holes or tears in the fabric.
- If you have been provided with a surgical mask, do **not** reuse it.

## Your protection beyond face shields and face masks

Your employer should evaluate or assess your workplace to identify all the ways you may be potentially exposed to infected individuals. The employer should then develop a plan to protect you and co-workers from COVID-19. **Wearing face masks and face shields should not be the only method for worker protection.** Your employer should inform you and train you on the plan.

Some promising worker protection methods your employer might use include:

- Placing physical barriers such as a Plexiglas (plastic) screen between you and clients/the public;
- Providing more breaks and improved access to soap and water so you can wash your hands;
- Adjusting work schedules and/or rotating staff to limit the amount of time you are exposed to the general public; and
- Cleaning and disinfecting workplace surfaces and equipment frequently.

And if face shields and masks are part of the plan, employers should provide them **free of charge** and make frequent replacements when they become damaged or dirty.