Institute Guidelines on Use of Face Coverings to Protect Others

When worn properly, face coverings mitigate the transmission of disease by preventing the wearer from potentially spreading droplets with the virus when the wearer coughs, sneezes, or talks.

Institute Requirements
In accordance with guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and state and local orders, Caltech requires that everyone including visitors, vendors, and contractors on the campus and off-site locations properly wear a face covering that fully covers their nose and mouth at all times when in buildings or outdoors. Face coverings with one-way valves may not be used as they are not effective for source control; such coverings may allow the wearer’s respiratory droplets to spread.

Wearing a face covering supplements, but does not replace, physical-distancing requirements. All faculty, staff, students, and visitors should continue to maintain at least 6-feet of distance from others while onsite. If wearing a face covering impedes your ability to complete a job or task, you should contact your supervisor or adviser for evaluation of alternative solutions.

As required by law, Caltech will make reasonable accommodations to otherwise qualified individuals with known disabilities including students, faculty, postdoctoral scholars, staff, volunteers, interns, and job applicants to ensure equal employment opportunities and equal access to Caltech educational programs, services, activities, and facilities unless doing so would constitute an undue hardship or a fundamental alteration. Caltech does not have an obligation to provide an accommodation if the proposed accommodation poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others.

There are limited exceptions to the requirements for wearing a face covering onsite. These include:

- When eating or drinking; maintaining physical distancing is still required
- When swimming or engaging in other approved, supervised activities within the athletic facilities where a face covering is otherwise prohibitive
- When alone in a private office or a private vehicle
- Individuals who have been instructed by their medical provider that they should not wear a face covering. These individuals should, however, wear a face shield with a drape on the bottom edge, as long as their condition permits doing so. A drape that is form fitting under the chin is preferred. This must be approved by Human Resources Disability Leave and Administration Unit at (626) 395-3092 or leaveunit@caltech.edu.

Additional exemptions and protocols for lecturing, filming, or participating in a recorded presentation are outlined in a Recording Procedure document.

Selecting A Face Cover
When selecting a face covering, there are many choices. Current CDC guidance recommends that individuals do the following:

- Wear a covering with two or more layers of breathable, washable fabric
- Wear a covering that fits snugly against your face without gaps
- Reduce fogging when wearing glasses by finding a covering that fits closely over your nose and one that has a nose wire
The CDC does not currently recommend the use of face shields and gaiters. Evaluation of these face covers is on-going but effectiveness is unknown at this time.

Caltech continues to monitor research (external and internal) on the effectiveness of different types of face coverings and will update the Institute’s guidance to align with new information and recommendations as it is available.

Additional guidance on the use of and care for your face covering is available in the How to Wear and Care for Your Face Covering document.