

## Institute Guidelines on Use of Masks

When worn properly, masks mitigate the transmission of disease by preventing the wearer from spreading virus-carrying droplets when the wearer coughs, sneezes, or talks. Caltech's guidelines for the use of masks were developed in accordance with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as well as state and local health orders.

### Who this applies to:

- All students, staff, faculty, and other individuals on Caltech's Pasadena campus, regardless of vaccination status.
- All individuals reporting to off-campus facilities. (However, employees, students, and visitors to off-site locations managed by Caltech should consult with the management at that location and expect to follow all local public health and government orders for that municipality.)

### When to wear a mask:

- At all times indoors, except when in a private office, a private setting, or when performing a specific task or job that would otherwise prevent use of a mask.
- Masks are strongly recommended, but not required, in outdoor settings and environments where physical distancing is limited.

### When to wear an N95 or KN95 mask:

- Students are required to wear a NIOSH-approved N95 mask at all times in instructional settings, including indoor and outdoor classrooms. Caltech is supplying all enrolled students with a supply of NIOSH-approved N95 masks for personal use in these settings.
- All researchers and human subjects participating in in-person research sessions are required by the [Institutional Review Board](#) to wear high-quality N95 or KN95 masks while engaging in human subject research on campus.
- KN95 and N95 masks are being made available through the Caltech Store to employees and students for personal use and at no cost to the individuals, in accordance with the state's workplace safety requirements.

### When you can stop wearing a mask:

- Outdoors, when not an instructional setting or crowded location.
- Indoors, in your Caltech-owned dormitory or congregate living residence, provided you are only in the company of other household members (such as assigned roommates or suitemates), and only in that shared living space.
- Indoors, when alone in a private office, a private setting, or when performing a specific task or job that would otherwise prevent use of a mask.
- If you are a Caltech employee and wearing a mask impedes your ability to complete a job or task, you should contact your supervisor or adviser for evaluation of alternative solutions. Voice-amplification systems will be provided to instructors who are concerned about teaching while masked.

### How to select a mask:

- It should have two or more layers of breathable fabric.
- It should fully cover your nose and mouth.

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- It should fit snugly against your face without gaps.
- It should have a nose wire to prevent air from leaking out of the top. (This should also help reduce fogging when wearing glasses.)

As required by law, Caltech will make reasonable accommodations regarding masks for 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. 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.

Caltech continues to monitor research (external and internal) on the effectiveness of different types of masks and will update the Institute's guidance to align with new information and recommendations as it is available. For more information, please review the [EPA review of the effectiveness of face masks](#), the [CDC's guide to face masks](#), and a [review of the effectiveness](#) of several dozen commercially available masks by a Caltech faculty group (access.caltech credentials required).