St. Clair County Health Center stance on masking is as CDC directs as follows:

It is highly recommended that social distancing of 6 feet be observed. Masks should be worn if social distancing can not be met. Masks should be worn by all ages over 2 years of age. Masks should be worn over the nose and mouth. Cloth face coverings are important to help slow the spread of COVID-19 stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms’ length) from other people who are not from your household in both indoor and outdoor spaces. **Handwashing is one of the best ways to protect from getting sick.**

Germs can spread from other people or surfaces when you:

* Touch your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
* Prepare or eat food and drinks with unwashed hands
* Touch a contaminated surface or objects
* Blow your nose, cough, or sneeze into hands and then touch other people’s hands or common objects
* Before, during, and after preparing food
* Before eating food
* Before and after caring for someone at home who is sick with vomiting or diarrhea
* Before and after treating a cut or wound
* After using the toilet
* After [changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet](https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/diapering/index.html)
* After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
* After touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste
* **After**handling pet food or pet treats
* **After** touching garbage
* Wearing cloth face [coverings](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html) and recommends that people wear cloth face coverings in public settings and when around people who live outside of their household. The use of cloth face coverings is especially important when [social distancing](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/social-distancing.html) is difficult to maintain. 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.  [Cloth face coverings](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html) are meant to protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected. CDC recommends that people wear masks in public settings and when around people who don’t live in your household, especially when other [social distancing](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/social-distancing.html) measures are difficult to maintain.
* Masks may help prevent people who have COVID-19 from spreading the virus to others.
* Masks are most likely to reduce the spread of COVID-19 when they are widely used by people in public settings.
* Masks should NOT be worn by children under the age of 2 or anyone who has trouble breathing, is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.
* Masks with exhalation valves or vents should NOT be worn to help prevent the person wearing the mask from spreading COVID-19 to others (source control).
* CDC recommends all people 2 years of age and older wear a mask in public settings and when around people who don’t live in your household, especially when other [social distancing](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/social-distancing.html) measures are difficult to maintain.
* COVID-19 can be spread by people who do not have symptoms and do not know that they are infected. That’s why it’s important for everyone to wear masks in public settings and practice [social distancing](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/social-distancing.html) (staying at least 6 feet away from other people).
* While masks are strongly encouraged to reduce the spread of COVID-19, CDC recognizes there are specific instances when wearing a mask may not be feasible. In these instances, [adaptations and alternatives](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html#feasibility-adaptations) should be considered whenever possible (see below for examples).

## The mask helps prevent a person who is sick from spreading the virus to others. It helps keep respiratory droplets contained and from reaching other people.

## **Who Should Not Wear a Mask**

Masks should **not**be worn by:

* Children younger than 2 years old
* Anyone who has trouble breathing
* Anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance

**It is not possible to wear one:**

For example,

* People who are deaf or hard of hearing—or those who care for or interact with a person who is hearing impaired—may be unable to wear masks if they rely on lipreading to communicate. In this situation, consider using a clear mask. If a clear mask isn’t available, consider whether you can use written communication, use closed captioning, or decrease background noise to make communication possible while wearing a mask that blocks your lips.
* Some people, such as people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental health conditions or other sensory sensitivities, may have challenges wearing a mask. They should consult with their healthcare provider for advice about wearing masks.
* Younger children (e.g., preschool or early elementary aged) may be unable to wear a mask properly, particularly for an extended period of time. Wearing of masks may be prioritized at times when it is difficult to maintain a distance of 6 feet from others (e.g., during carpool drop off or pick up, or when standing in line at school). Ensuring proper mask size and fit and providing children with frequent reminders and education on the importance and proper wear of masks may help address these issues.
* People should not wear masks while engaged in activities that may cause the mask to become wet, like when [swimming at the beach or pool](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/parks-rec/public-beaches.html). A wet mask may make it difficult to breathe. For activities like swimming, it is particularly important to maintain physical distance from others when in the water.
* People who are engaged in high intensity activities, like running, may not be able to wear a mask if it causes difficulty breathing. If unable to wear a mask, consider conducting the activity in a location with greater ventilation and air exchange (for instance, outdoors versus indoors) and where it is possible to maintain physical distance from others.
* People who work in a setting where masks may increase the risk of [heat-related illness](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/heatstress/) or cause safety concerns due to introduction of a hazard (for instance, straps getting caught in machinery) may consult with an occupational safety and health professional to determine the appropriate mask for their setting. Outdoor workers may prioritize use of masks when in close contact with other people, like during group travel or shift meetings, and remove masks when social distancing is possible.

## **Does not recommend** using masks for source control if they have an exhalation valve or vent. Face Shields

* A face shield is primarily used for eye protection for the person wearing it. At this time, it is not known what level of protection a face shield provides to people nearby from the spray of respiratory droplets from the wearer. There is currently not enough evidence to support the effectiveness of face shields for source control. Therefore, CDC **does not currently recommend** use of face shields as a substitute for masks.
* However, wearing a mask may not be feasible in every situation for some people for example, people who are deaf or hard of hearing—or those who care for or interact with a person who is hearing impaired. Here are some considerations for individuals who must wear a face shield instead of a mask:
  + Although evidence on face shields is limited, the available data suggest that the following face shields may provide better source control than others:
    - Face shields that wrap around the sides of the wearer’s face and extend below the chin.
    - Hooded face shields.
  + Face shield wearers should wash their hands before and after removing the face shield and avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth when removing it.
  + Disposable face shields should only be worn for a single use and disposed of according to manufacturer instructions.
  + Reusable face shields should be cleaned and disinfected after each use according to manufacturer instructions or by following [CDC face shield cleaning instructions](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ppe-strategy/eye-protection.html).
* Ensure that students and staff are aware of the [correct use of cloth face coverings,](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-wear-cloth-face-coverings.html) including wearing cloth face coverings over the nose and mouth and securely around the face. Ensure that all students and staff are aware that cloth face coverings should not be worn if they are wet. A wet cloth face covering may make it difficult to breathe. Ensure that all students and staff are aware that they should never share or swap cloth face coverings.
* Students’ cloth face coverings should be clearly identified with their names or initials, to avoid confusion or swapping. Students’ face coverings may also be labeled to indicate top/bottom and front/back.
* Cloth face coverings should be stored in a space designated for each student that is separate from others when not being worn (e.g., in individually labeled containers or bags, personal lockers, or cubbies).
* Cloth face coverings should be [washed](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-wash-cloth-face-coverings.html) after every day of use and/or before being used again, or if visibly soiled.
* Students and schools should consider having additional cloth face coverings available for students, teachers, and staff in case a back-up cloth face covering is needed during the day and to facilitate every day washing of cloth face coverings.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/cloth-face-cover.html>