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*** Press Release ***

San Francisco Expands Face Covering Rules to Address COVID-19 Surge and Align with State and Federal Guidance

San Francisco, CA – The Department of Public Health announced an update to the City’s face covering requirements amid the current surge in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations. The new rules, which went into effect at midnight, require anyone age 10 and up to wear a face covering when approaching a distance of six feet from others, in enclosed shared workplaces, in building common areas, and when working in food service. The updated health order also requires individuals who are unable to wear a face covering based on their medical condition to have a written exemption from a medical professional.

Face coverings reduce the amount of aerosols that people generate and release into the air when they talk, posing a risk of infection to others. They also provide some protection to the wearer by reducing the amount of infectious droplets expelled from persons not wearing a face covering that would otherwise land on the wearer’s face.

“Wearing a face covering is more important now than ever,” said Dr. Grant Colfax, Director of Health. “Substantial scientific evidence shows that when combined with physical distancing and other health and safety practices like handwashing and regular disinfection of surfaces, face coverings significantly reduce the chance of COVID-19 spreading in the community.”

Face coverings are required in all fluid situations where distances between people change frequently and where social distancing cannot be strictly monitored. This includes walking on a sidewalk or any other pedestrian right-of-way, on public transit, and while at parks, outdoor plazas, dining spaces and bars.

To help mitigate the spread of COVID-19, a face covering is required, even when alone, while working in a cubicle, areas with shared equipment, and shared offices, and also when in common areas such as conference rooms, elevators, laundry rooms, break rooms, lobbies, hallways, and bathrooms. Face coverings are also mandatory when preparing food or other items for sale or distribution. When alone in a completely enclosed space like a private office, a face covering is not required.

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If an individual is unable to wear a medical or fabric face mask, they are still required to cover their face with an alternative piece of fabric such as a bandana, gaiter, or a face shield that has drapes on its bottom edge. The only exceptions are if a medical professional has provided a written exemption based on an individual’s medical condition, other health concern, or disability; and if wearing a face covering while at work will create a safety hazard.

Additionally, children under the age of 2 should not wear a face covering due to the risk of suffocation. Children ages 2 to 9 are encouraged to wear a face covering whenever they can, and children over the age of 10 must wear a face covering, just like adults.

The updated Health Order will remain in effect indefinitely and until it is extended, rescinded, suspended or amended by the San Francisco Department of Public Health. This order aligns the City and County of San Francisco with the California Department of Public Health and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines for face coverings.

To view the Health Order, please visit [www.sfdph.org](http://www.sfdph.org).

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