

HQ SOUTHCOM Face Covering FAQs

Why should I wear a face covering?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recommended wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult or impossible to maintain, especially in areas of significant community-based transmission. Our local area continues to be a “hot spot” of community-based transmission with over 50% of the Florida cases occurring in our tri-county area.

Viruses are transmitted by droplets, large infectious particles that will fall out of the air quickly, within minutes. Once on nearby surfaces, these droplets can survive for around 72 hours. When you touch a contaminated doorknob or key pad for example and then you touch your face, you are at risk to become sick. Wearing a cloth face covering can stop the spread of these droplets, i.e. stop the virus transmission to others. They are not intended to protect the wearer. Rather we wear face coverings to protect those around us.

The COVID-19 virus is also transmitted via airborne particles. These tiny particles stay in the air longer than larger droplets and can be breathed in. Cloth face coverings are not able to keep you from breathing in airborne particles. Thus to protect yourself, you need to continue to use physical distancing (at least six feet from others), and stay home as much as possible.

Why did this new guidance come out?

Recent studies show that a significant portion of individuals with coronavirus are asymptomatic (i.e. they do not have any symptoms) or are pre-symptomatic (i.e. they are in the 48 hours before symptoms will start). Despite their lack of symptoms, those individuals can transmit the virus to others when they are in close contact with others. Cloth face coverings can help prevent an infected individual from spreading the virus to others. Each of us could be an asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic virus-transmitter today and not know it.

What kind of face covering should I wear?

Home-fabricated or personally purchased non-medical cloth face coverings following CDC guidance are recommended for the general population. Surgical masks and N95 masks should be reserved for healthcare and emergency response workers only. With the critical nation-wide shortages, our front-line medics need those masks the most right now. For the rest of us, a tightly woven, cotton fabric is recommended with at least two layers of fabric used. Home-made filters that are made from household items may not provide benefit (coffee filters, paper towels) and may even be harmful (inhaling fibers from cut-up air conditioner or vacuum filters).

Where can I find more info on making a cloth face covering?

Many patterns and styles of cloth face coverings exist. There are some that are designed to be sewn and some that do not require sewing. There are many links that show ways to make cloth face coverings. Here are a few examples:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html#studies>

<https://southcom.joint.afpims.mil/coronavirus/>

<https://chw.org/newshub/stories/making-mask-instructions>

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https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/coronavirus/_documents/INF2003076_VW_Hand-Sewn%20Mask%20instructions-1.pdf

How should my face covering be worn?

Face coverings should fit snugly, but comfortably against the side of the face; be secure with ties or ear loops; include multiple layers of fabric; allow for breathing without restriction; and able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change in shape. They should not come in direct contact with your mouth. Face coverings must not be shared. To avoid unintentionally increasing exposure risk, individuals must be careful not to touch the areas near the nose and mouth, particularly when taking the face covering off. You should wash your hands before putting on and taking off your mask.

Using a face covering is NOT an option for ill employees. If you are ill, you should NOT come to work! Stay home, contact your supervisor and call your primary care manager for medical advice.

How should I take care of my face covering?

Before and after removing or handling the face cover, you should immediately wash their hands or use hand sanitizer. The face cover should be washed in a washing machine as often as practical.

Does this mean I can relax my social distancing requirements?

No! Individuals should not assume that this face covering is an effective, stand-alone method of protection. Your best defense against COVID-19 remains physical distancing, washing your hands and only leaving your home for essential errands/work. Staff and family should NOT change their approach toward activities involving gatherings of people. There is NO change to our workplace restrictions (maximizing telework, limiting face-to-face meetings, etc). At work and home, continue to be vigilant and avoid physical contact with others, limit trips outside the home/office, and don't let your guard down. The face covering does not reduce the need for hand-washing. We all need to be mindful to avoid touching our face; this is a hard habit to break.

What is the military guidance on this?

Service members should comply with published Service and DoD guidance. All individuals on USAG-Miami should comply with attached guidance dated 06 APR 20.

Useful Links:

CDC Face Covering Recommendations: <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>.

CDC Cloth Face Covering FAQs: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-faq.html>



REPLY TO THE
ATTENTION OF

UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF
9301 NW 33rd Street
MIAMI, FL 33172-1217

6 Apr 2020

SCCOS

MEMORANDUM FOR ALL PERSONS ENTERING U.S. ARMY GARRISON - MIAMI

SUBJECT: Use of Cloth Face Coverings in Response to the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)

References:

(a) Secretary of Defense Memorandum, subject: "Department of Defense Guidance on the Use of Cloth Face Coverings," dated April 5, 2020

(b) Commander, U.S. Southern Command Email, subject: "Command Update: Building Our Team # 49," dated April 4, 2020

(c) Installation Commander Memorandum, subject: "Declaration of a Public Health Emergency on U.S. Army Garrison Miami," dated March 27, 2020

1. Purpose. In response to the global outbreak of COVID-19, and in order to maintain force health protection, readiness of the force, and mitigate the risk of transmission, U.S. Army Garrison - Miami is implementing references a and b pursuant to reference c. This memorandum takes effect on 6 April 2020.

2. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain, especially in areas of significant community-based transmission. Military personnel, DoD civilian employees, their family members, and DoD contractors are strongly encouraged to follow CDC guidelines on the use of cloth face coverings in public settings or where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain.

3. Effective immediately, to the extent practical, all individuals on U.S. Army Garrison – Miami will wear cloth face coverings as follows:

a. Face coverings will be worn when walking through passageways, from your vehicle, or when using restrooms or other areas where you will encounter coworkers.

b. Face coverings may be removed in your office when working alone and when on a VTC so long as you are not in a room with others. Face coverings may also be removed for eating and drinking.

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c. Security checkpoints may require the lowering of face coverings to verify identification.

4. The Military Departments will issue further guidance on wear for Service members. As an interim measure, all individuals are encouraged to fashion face coverings from household items or common materials, such as clean T-shirts or other clean cloths that can cover the nose and mouth area. For military, face coverings will be a solid color or camouflage pattern and will be workplace appropriate – a uniform t-shirt/handkerchief/bandana is authorized. Medical personal protective equipment such as N95 respirators or surgical masks will not be issued for this purpose as these will be reserved for the appropriate personnel.

5. The requirement to wear a face covering is in addition to other cleaning measures and social distancing measures previously implemented including washing/sanitizing your hands, cleaning your work stations, maintaining six feet of social distance, virtual meetings, maximizing telework, and elevator protocols.

6. Requests for exceptions to this requirement will be forwarded through the chain of command or director to me for consideration.

7. POC is the Public Health Emergency Officer.

//signed//

PATRICIA M. ANSLOW Major
General, U.S. Army Senior
Installation Commander