

August 2, 2020

Hallsville Parents & Community:

In response to concerns over the stringent requirements HISD has put into place regarding mitigating the spread of Covid-19 while on campus, including the requirement to wear a face covering, we have developed this FAQ to aid in your understanding of our decision making and thought process.

First and foremost, we are a group of highly experienced and skilled educators that care very deeply about the future academic and health outcomes of the children and adults in this community. At this time, we are being asked to make medical decisions regarding a virus for which there is ever-changing, and at times, untrustworthy information. Since we are not medical experts, we have consulted with trusted medical experts in our community and done our due diligence to research so that, at the end of the day, everyone in our care is safe. As continued data becomes available, we are prepared to make adjustments to this plan.

Below is a list of frequently asked questions that have come since the announcement of our "Return to Learn" plan. At the end of the questions are frequently referenced publications and articles that we have used to reach our decision.

As always, we appreciate your support in our attempt to keep everyone healthy and safe during these unprecedented times.

Sincerely,

Your HISD Administration Team

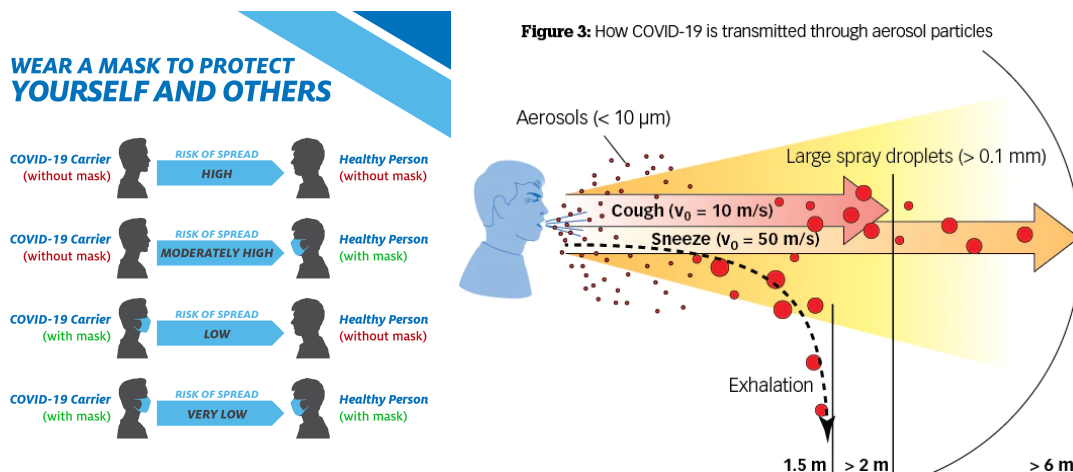
What research is there that face coverings slow the spread of Covid-19?

According to the latest findings, the virus is mostly spread by respiratory droplets when people talk, laugh, sing, cough, or sneeze. People can show no symptoms when they are infected and/or prior to becoming ill. During those times, they are contagious.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) recommend that people wear a face covering in public to limit the spread of respiratory droplets, especially in situations where social distancing is hard to maintain. Covid is spread by droplet transmission AND unlike aerosol droplet transmission (like the flu) the droplets are large enough to be affected by gravity, thus not hanging in the air, but dropping after 3-6 feet (why distance is important) and the droplets are large enough that they can not easily permeate a face covering like a cloth or disposable mask.

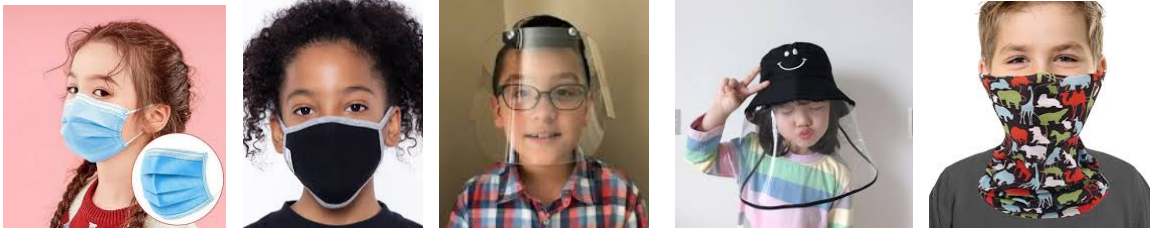
“You’ve probably seen the videos of closely-packed dominos and mousetraps, where a single item fires off a huge cascade. The closer the dominos (or mousetraps), the more chaos gets generated. Every infectious disease has a transmission rate (R_0). A disease with an R_0 of 1.0 means that every infected person, on average, infects one other person. A disease whose R_0 is less than 1.0 will die out. The strain of flu that caused the 1918 pandemic had an R_0 of 1.8. The R_0 of the virus which causes COVID-19 was estimated at 2.4 by Imperial College researchers, although some research suggests it could be as high as 5.7. This means that without containment measures, COVID-19 will spread far and fast. Importantly, COVID-19 patients are most infectious in the early days of the disease” (To et al. 2020; Zou et al. 2020; Bai et al. 2020; Zhang et al. 2020; Doremalen et al. 2020; Wei 2020), during which they generally have few or no symptoms.

“What you want is 100 percent of people to wear masks, but you’ll settle for 80 percent,” said Rutherford. In one simulation, researchers predicted that 80 percent of the population wearing masks would do more to reduce COVID-19 spread than a strict lockdown. The latest forecast from the Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation suggests that 33,000 deaths could be avoided by October 1 if 95 percent of people wore masks in public. Even if you live in a community where few people wear masks, you would still reduce your own chances of catching the virus by wearing one, said Chin-Hong and Rutherford.”



What are the face covering options for my child?

According to the Texas Education Agency (TEA), “masks include non-medical and medical grade disposable face masks and cloth face coverings (over the nose and mouth). Full-face shields may be used in place of a mask to protect eyes, nose, and mouth whenever a mask is not feasible or whenever the education context may benefit from the ability to see an individual’s full face.”



The latest Governor’s orders don’t require face coverings for students less than 10 years of age. Why is Hallsville ISD requiring them for all students?

Many of our students and staff members are in a category that is considered “high risk” to developing severe complications, including death, from Covid-19. Additionally, top health organizations and medical professionals support the wearing of masks for students over the age of 3 when social distancing is not possible. There will be many times during the school day where it will be impossible to social distance (transitions, buses, some classrooms, etc.).

- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends wearing a face covering:
 - All people over the age of 3
 - It is not possible to stay at least 6 feet apart
 - Indoors
 - During team sports when going to/from the field, in dugouts or sidelines, participating in pre/post game strategy sessions
- The Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommends wearing a face covering:
 - All people over the age of 2
 - When in public setting and when around people who don’t live in your household
 - When other social distancing measure are difficult to maintain
 - Cloth masks should NOT be worn by anyone having trouble breathing or cannot remove the mask independently
- The World Health Organization recommends wearing a non-medical face masks for the following:
 - General population in public settings, including schools when physical distancing cannot be implemented
 - General public on transportation
 - When employees are in close contact or potential close contact with others
- Vulnerable populations include:
 - People aged ≥ 60
 - People with underlying comorbidities, such as cardiovascular disease or diabetes, chronic lung disease, cancer, cerebrovascular disease, immunosuppression

What if my child is scared of wearing a face covering?

- Wear one together and find a way to make it fun
- Consider getting a face covering that suits their interests (favorite animal or character)
- For younger children, let a favorite stuffed animal wear a mask
- Practice around the house
- Show your child pictures of other children wearing one
- Assure them that other students will also be wearing a covering so they don't feel like they will be "different"
- Make it a habit
- Model it for your children
- Make sure they don't hear your concerns about it; they believe what you believe

What about children with special healthcare needs?

- [Healthychildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org) (American Academy of Pediatrics) suggests that students at high-risk or severely immunocompromised should talk to their doctor about acquiring N-95 masks for protection
- They also suggest that students with severe cognitive impairments should try to wear a cloth face covering because it offers greater protection, but could also choose a face shield
- All others should be able to find an appropriate face covering

Resources

[Anthony Fauci to Teachers: You'll Be "Part of the Experiment" in Reopening Schools](https://www.healthychildren.org)

<https://www.healthychildren.org>

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/guidemasks.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>

<https://www.today.com/parents/cdc-says-children-should-wear-masks-slow-covid-19-spread-t178005>

<https://www.latimes.com/lifestyle/story/2020-04-24/should-kids-wear-coronavirus-face-masks>

<https://www.fast.ai/2020/04/13/masks-summary/>

<https://www.fast.ai/2020/04/20/skeptics-masks/>

<https://theconversation.com/masks-help-stop-the-spread-of-coronavirus-the-science-is-simple-and-im-one-of-100-experts-urging-governors-to-require-public-mask-wearing-138507>

<https://www.authorea.com/users/316109/articles/446320-masks-for-the-public-laying-straw-men-to-rest>

<https://www.preprints.org/manuscript/202004.0203/v3>

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

<https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/covid/SY-20-21-Public-Health-Guidance.pdf>