# Face Shield
Frequently Asked Questions

What are face shields, and how are they used for protection from COVID-19?

A face shield is a transparent barrier that covers the face and is typically open at the sides and bottom. A face shield is a form of personal protective equipment (PPE) primarily used by health care workers to protect their face (eyes, nose, and mouth) from splashes and sprays of body fluids. Face shields are not commonly used alone, but are often worn with other protective equipment, such as respirators or surgical masks, to protect the wearer from COVID-19. Examples include a nurse caring for a hospitalized COVID-19 patient or a health professional collecting a nasal sample from a person being tested for COVID-19.
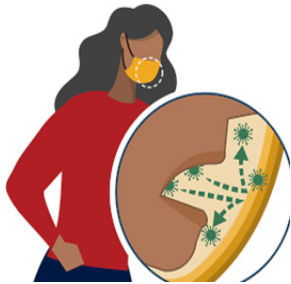
In contrast, face coverings (cloth or surgical masks) that fit snugly over the nose and mouth are used to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to other people in the event that the wearer of the mask is infected with COVID-19 and doesn't know it, as well as to provide some protection for the wearer.

Can a face shield be used alone as a substitute for a face covering to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

No, **a face shield alone cannot be substituted for a face covering** under guidance of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). Studies have found that SARS-COV-2 can spread through small, airborne particles known as "aerosols" that are emitted when people talk, cough, or sneeze. These aerosols have been shown to remain suspended in the air for varying periods of time, depending on their size and air flow in the area. We expect, based on what is known about how aerosols behave, that the aerosols exhaled through the nose and mouth of someone wearing a face shield can easily travel around the open sides of a face shield.

Source: MIT Medical

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If these aerosols contain the virus that causes COVID-19, other people may become infected.

What if I cannot wear a face covering due to a medical condition or other exemption?

Face shields may be considered for members of the public who cannot wear a face covering due to a medical condition or other exemption, although they may not work as well as face coverings in their ability to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to others. A cloth "drape" should be attached to the bottom edge of the face shield and tucked into the shirt to minimize gaps between the face and face shield. The drape can be made using cloth material and taped to the bottom of the face shield; face shields with drapes are also available through some vendors. For situations in workplaces where a worker who is required to wear a face covering (other than a respirator) cannot comply, Cal/OSHA currently considers a face shield plus drape an acceptable alternative. To see the list of exemptions from wearing a cloth face covering, see the CDPH *Guidance on the Use of Cloth Face Coverings.*

What attributes should I look for in a face shield?

The following attributes are strongly recommended when purchasing or manufacturing a face shield:

- Extends down below the chin

- Extends around to the ears

- No gap between the forehead and the visor (or cover the gap)

- Addition of a cloth drape extending from the bottom edge of the shield and tucked into the shirt or collar, when a respirator, mask, or cloth face covering is not worn.