



## **MAYOR DAVID J. NARKEWICZ**

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# **Northampton Board of Health Amends Covid-19 Rules for Wearing of Face Coverings In Public Places**

NORTHAMPTON - Today, the City of Northampton issued revised mandatory orders for wearing face coverings in public places. The latest rules expand upon and clarify rules issued April 16, 2020, by the Health Department, along with earlier guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and Governor Baker's Office.

The revised rules outline requirements for employees and customers of essential businesses and people using outdoor public places in the City of Northampton. The new rules are designed to be simple to understand and easy to enforce. Effective May 13, 2020, all Northampton residents and visitors are required to wear face coverings in most public places, to help minimize the spread of disease. The revised rules are detailed on the city's web page at <http://northamptonma.gov/2126/City-Resources-Updates>.

Public Health experts agree that masks are effective in reducing the spread of COVID-19. "As we work to keep people safe and slow the transmission of COVID-19, we need to make the directions simple," said City of Northampton Health Director Merridith O'Leary, "The least confusing and most effective approach is to require masks in most places where people will encounter other people - at work, on essential shopping trips, and when in public recreational spaces. If everybody's wearing a mask, it will dramatically reduce the opportunity and possibility of spread of COVID-19."

The most significant change relates to wearing face coverings at outdoor public places in the City of Northampton. On May 8, 2020, the city reopened, with restrictions, most public parks and recreation areas and found that due to the popularity of use, that most could not safely maintain an adequate social distance at all times. In order to provide a safe environment with rules easily understood by all users, the revised guidelines now require the wearing of face coverings at the following places:

- Any place within the Central and General Business Districts as designated under the Northampton Zoning Ordinance. These areas are generally known as Florence Center and

Downtown Northampton.

- Within any and all parks and recreation areas that have been opened to the public.
- On any bike path or multipurpose trail, including but not limited to the MassCentral Rail Trail (Norwottuck section), Rocky Hill Trail, and the New Haven and Northampton Canal Rail Trail (Manhan section).
- Any other public place within the city where one cannot reasonably expect to maintain at least a six foot social distance from all other persons at all times.

Mayor David J. Narkewicz noted that getting people used to the idea of wearing face coverings now is important. “As we plan for a phased reopening of our businesses, city services, and other things closed during this pandemic, we need people to do their part to prevent new outbreaks of infection that could overwhelm our health care system’s ability to respond. I ask everyone to demonstrate care for their neighbors and wear face coverings while in public places.”

Face coverings worn by persons in accordance with this order shall be any cloth that securely covers the customer’s nose and mouth, including but not limited to scarves, bandanas, turtlenecks or similar coverings.

Please note the following important exclusions to the order:

- Nothing in this order is intended to encourage residents to act as an enforcement authority for the City of Northampton. Residents should not take it upon themselves to approach people in violation of this order. Residents are urged to focus solely on their personal compliance with this order.
- Nothing in this order shall be construed to require a face covering to be worn by children under the age of two (2) or children who frequently compromise mask integrity with frequent manipulations or removals; anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance; or anyone who cannot wear a face covering for other underlying health and safety reasons.
- Nothing in this order shall be construed to reduce or eliminate the requirement of maintaining safe distancing.

For more information contact:

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