



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Many questions have been received since the Minnesota Department of Health released its latest guidance on December 28, particularly related to the requirement of masks during participation. Below are answers to some of the most common topics, many of which have been provided by MDH.

Minnesota Hockey will continue to communicate updates as they become available. For the latest COVID-19 information and protocols, visit [www.minnesotahockey.org/covid19](http://www.minnesotahockey.org/covid19).

## Mask Mandate

All answers to questions in this section have been provided by MDH or the referenced source. Minnesota Hockey representatives are not medical experts and make no representation of such, nor assume any responsibility for the completeness of this information.

### **What masks are allowed to be used?**

Face coverings must cover both the nose and mouth to be approved for use. These can be a cloth mask, a disposable mask, a neck gaiter, a scarf, a bandana or a religious face covering.

Some helmets may interfere with wearing a face covering safely or effectively, particularly in the case of younger athletes. Minnesota Hockey has secured approval for players to wear the [CCM Game On Mask, or the Bauer Concept 3 Face Shield and Splash Guard](#) combination. Although these may not be as protective as a face covering listed above, these would satisfy the requirement if it is a full-face shield that extends to the ears and below the chin without exposed gaps or vents near the mouth and nose. However, a face covering should be the covering of choice whenever feasible.

**Much of the guidance available on the internet, including credible sources such as the WHO, CDC and Mayo Clinic, states masks should not be worn during high intensity activities due to safety reasons. Why would this be made a requirement if it's unsafe?**

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) announced in early December it now [recommends athletes wear cloth face coverings](#) during group training and competition as well as when they are on the sidelines, in the locker room and traveling. The coverings have been shown to be well-tolerated during exercise and can prevent the spread of SARS-CoV-2.

Several Mayo Clinic representatives including exercise physiologist Dr. Andrew Jagim, infectious disease specialist Dr. Pritish Tosh and a leading vaccine researcher Dr. Gregory Poland have stated there is no evidence wearing a mask during exercise is unsafe or harmful, especially for young, active and healthy people who would be participating in hockey. To hear more, watch this [KARE 11 story that features Dr. Jagim](#).

For those interested in reading related research, additional information on topics such as oxygen levels, heart rate, exertion levels, etc. is available [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).



**I've read in several places wearing a mask during exercise can cause headaches, light headedness and dizziness. How is that safe?**

According to the AAP & MDH, exercising while wearing a mask is being compared to working out at a high altitude; frequency and intensity of exercise can be gradually increased as a person becomes more accustomed to exercising with a mask. If athletes experience any of the symptoms listed and the cloth face covering is removed for a break, the athlete should remain at least 6 feet away from all other individuals.

**How will players wear a mouthguard with a mask?**

Minnesota Hockey has modified its mouthguard rule for this season only. Mouthguards are now recommended for all players but are only required for players that are Peewee/12U and above, which aligns with [USA Hockey Rule 304\(f\)](#).

*Via USA Hockey:* Enforcement may be more difficult for officials, but the USA Hockey rule requiring mouthguards has not changed. There is currently no rule requiring mouthguards to be tethered to a helmet. Custom fit mouthguards allow for ample breathing that should not be an issue. The quality of off the shelf boil and bite guards also allows for a better fit and breathing.

**If a player has a documented medical condition that prevents the wearing of a face covering, how is that handled?**

Players that obtain official documentation from a medical professional stating that wearing a mask poses a health risk to the player would not be required to wear a mask. Coaches should keep a copy of the documentation and be able to provide it to opposing teams and officials upon request.

**Why are masks being required now when hockey and other sports went on for months in the summer and fall and there's been little to no evidence of transmission within sports?**

The goal of MDH is to safely return Minnesota's youth and amateur athletes to play and make this return sustainable. While Minnesota's COVID-19 case growth has declined, our numbers continue to be at elevated levels, and gathering for organized sports still comes with substantial risk. It will be important for all teams, associations, and leagues to follow strict COVID-19 mitigation protocols as practices resume.

**Why is Minnesota requiring this when so many other states are not requiring masks and have far fewer protocols overall?**

A growing number of states including Colorado, Massachusetts, Michigan and Wisconsin have required masks to be worn while participating in indoor sports for several months.

**The Minnesota mask mandate does not require young children to wear a mask. Does my four-year-old need to wear one during Mini-Mite practice?**

Per the state mandate, players ages five and under are not required to wear a mask, including during organized sports.