

## Updated masking mandate information for schools and sports

Information changes rapidly as our knowledge of COVID-19 grows. Communities have been confused about recommendations from the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) on masking precautions and how they impact K-12 and higher education facilities and sporting events in our region. We'd like to provide some clarity.

Geisinger's policy and recommendations align with the most updated guidance by the DOH ([Nov. 19, 2020](#)) that mandates masks be worn at indoor and outdoor activities — including sporting events — by athletes, coaches and spectators:

- All K-12 and higher education athletes must wear masks for both indoor and outdoor sports.
- All coaches and spectators must wear masks for both indoor and outdoor sports.

In accordance with guidelines stipulated by the DOH, the only exceptions to wearing a mask are listed in [Section 3](#) of the updated DOH guidelines:

- If wearing a face covering while working would create an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task as determined by local, state, or federal regulators or workplace safety guidelines.
- If wearing a face covering would either cause a medical condition, or exacerbate an existing one, including respiratory issues that impede breathing, a mental health condition or a disability.
- When necessary to confirm the individual's identity.
- While obtaining a service that requires the temporary removal of the face covering, such as dental services.
- When working alone and isolated from interaction with other people with little or no expectation of in-person interaction.
- If an individual is communicating or seeking to communicate with someone who is hearing-impaired or has another disability, where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication.

The DOH and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provide recommendations for communities and hospitals across the state and the country. Geisinger's multidisciplinary team, including our infectious diseases and sports medicine experts, assesses how to integrate CDC and DOH guidance into our policies and practices, including our recommendations for higher education and K-12 sports safety.

We are reminding our physicians and staff of this policy and clarifying how they should proceed with masking recommendations for all indoor and outdoor sporting events.

# Geisinger

All of us are seeking some normalcy, especially for our kids. Sports remain a keystone of childhood, and lessons learned on the field are invaluable to life in general: lessons about triumph, heartbreak, teamwork — and most importantly right now, resilience. And right now, it is crucial that we all use resilience and a team mentality to beat this virus as a community.

Thank you for your understanding and adherence to this masking mandate. Together, we can stop the spread of COVID and get back to the things that we enjoy most, including sports.

For any questions, please contact [Allison Hess](#), vice president of Health Services, Health and Wellness Administration.