

ACP Policy Statement on Wearing Masks in Community Settings

Approved by the Executive Committee of the Board of Regents on behalf of the full Board of Regents on July 13, 2020

The American College of Physicians (ACP) supports federal, state, and local public health agencies recommending and putting interventions in place, informed by evidence, to reduce the transmission of SARS-COV-2 infection. ACP supports wearing surgical or cloth masks by the public in community settings when physical distancing is not possible, and believes that authorities may appropriately require it as a component of a comprehensive public health strategy to prevent and contain the spread of COVID-19. The strategy should also incorporate physical distancing, education about appropriate mask use (e.g., types of face coverings, application, safe use, and disposal), promotion of preventive hygiene protocols, and widespread diagnostic testing and contact tracing (1, 2). The strategy should take into account local demographics (e.g., high risk populations), epidemiologic data (e.g., reproduction rate, daily case counts, hospitalizations, and deaths), and exposure context (e.g., number of people, indoor vs outdoors, ventilation, etc.).