



ACP Policy Statement on Wearing Masks in Community Settings

Approved by the Executive Committee of the Board of Regents on behalf of the Board of Regents on January 11, 2021

- 1. The American College of Physicians supports the wearing of surgical or cloth masks by the public in community settings, and believes that federal, state, and local authorities may appropriately require it as a component of a comprehensive public health strategy to prevent and contain the spread of COVID-19 until sufficient population immunity is achieved through vaccination. 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.). (Modification to Policy Statement as approved by the ECBoR 20).**
- 2. The American College of Physicians supports requiring masks to be worn in interstate public transportation and in facilities run by the federal government as part of a comprehensive prevention strategy.**
- 3. The American College of Physicians supports asking the Occupational Health and Safety Administration to consider requiring that masks be worn in workplaces at high risk of virus transmission and in places where essential services are provided.**
- 4. The American College of Physicians supports creating new federal grants to incentivize states to promptly implement mask requirements as recommended by public health authorities within an appropriate grace period.**
- 5. The American College of Physicians supports an evaluation of conditioning federal grants and assistance to private businesses and organizations related to addressing the COVID-19 pandemic on implementation of a mask requirement for employees and customers.**
- 6. The American College of Physicians urges employers to implement mask requirements within their worksites, as part of a comprehensive prevention strategy, to protect their workers and their customers.**

- 7. The American College of Physicians supports a public education campaign, modeled on programs to discourage smoking and encourage wearing of seat belts, to encourage individuals to wear masks as part of a comprehensive prevention strategy against respiratory virus public health threats.**
- 8. The American College of Physicians supports a public education campaign to educate the general public about appropriate mask use and handling as part of a comprehensive prevention strategy against respiratory virus public health threats.**
- 9. The American College of Physicians urges governors to require the wearing of masks in public facilities run by their respective states, in manufacturing and retail establishments, in schools, in public transportation, and in other workplaces and facilities as part of a comprehensive prevention strategy.**
- 10. The American College of Physicians urges local and state governments to adequately and appropriately enforce mask requirements. Any incentives or penalties should be carefully weighed to ensure against potential negative impact on access and other measures of health equity. Officials should avoid issuing punitive fines and tickets at the individual level for noncompliance.**
- 11. The American College of Physicians supports efforts by federal, state, and local governments to subsidize or directly provide face masks to the public.**