

# Covid 19: Masks in Mass are required outdoors. Period.



The other day I was half way down a narrow path leading down to fresh pond when a gray-haired guy in no face mask started up the path in the opposite direction. I motioned to him to wait until I got to the bottom—but he kept going, moving closer and closer to me. “Sir!” I shouted. “Please social distance.” He ignored me (well, he was wearing earphones but he looked right at me) and kept on walking. I pulled as close I could to the opposite fence and turned away from him as he went by, feeling frightened, and, then, shaken. After I’d quarantined for three months, worn a mask and stayed six feet away from folks in supermarkets, on streets and near my condo, had some arrogant middle-aged guy given me a death sentence?



On Saturday, I decided to avoid Fresh Pond and run on the river, in Allston, many people were wearing face masks, but a group of people stood, chatting, on either side of the path. One of them—again, middle aged—wore no mask. A runner coming toward them from the other direction—stopped to ask them which side he should run on to get six feet away...The maskless guy said, “You’re fine.” I said. “You’re not wearing a mask.” He said, “I don’t need a mask, I’m outside.”

Two days later, I was in the parking lot at Target, in Watertown, on my way to pick up some coffee, curbside. A young woman stood near me, mask-less. "Where's your mask?" I asked. She replied, "I'm outdoors, I don't need a mask."



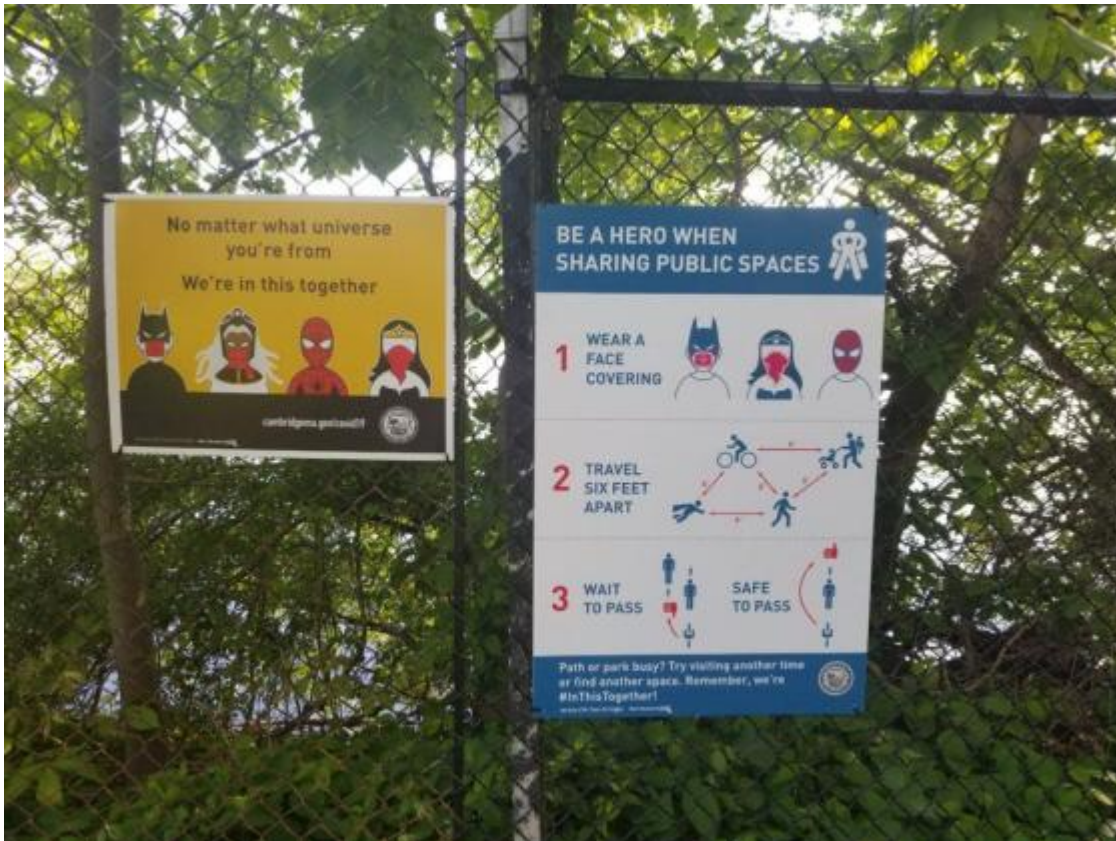
I then headed from there to Home Depot, across the street, hoping to pick up some flowers and cherry tomatoes to plant on my balcony. It was my third try.

The first time, heading in—had to go inside; asked the person monitoring the door if there were any rules; he said no. Walking through the store, I heard the occasional loudspeaker announcement to stay six feet away from the next person...but no one was doing that. I made it to the outdoor shop, getting increasingly tense; there were no shopping carts; to get one, I would have had to go back out, then back in again through the store. I decided to check the prices, instead, and come back another time, but shoppers were standing shoulder to shoulder, so I left.

The second time, the same thing thing happened. I picked up small fuschia and seedling lettuce plants. But I needed potting soil; the bags were too heavy for me to carry and, again, there were no shopping carts available. I was afraid to walk through the main store again, as folks had been going every which way, with carriages; so put down my goods, walked out, and asked the guard if I could speak with a manager. I wanted to tell him I thought this was a dangerous situation and ask if would be possible for them to mark floors with direction signals and six-foot distancing, like they do in food stores. The guard called and asked a manager to speak with me, I waited for a few minutes, but no manager ever came.

On Sunday, I tried one last time, but, again, though folks were wearing masks, there was no social distancing. I gave up—and drove to two different farm stands. They were less crowded...but were sold out of medium sized pots of cherry tomatoes, and had no lettuce. Oh, well. I did pick up some flower and basil plants at my local supermarket.

Today, on Fresh Pond, between 7:30 and 8 am I went by at least 7 people without masks—including three, old enough to know better, who were not even carrying masks. Two of them walked side by side in the center of the path, making it difficult for anyone stay far enough away from them; the third was smoking a cigarillo.



As a communications consultant, I'm willing to concede that the rules and restrictions are not entirely clear. Early on, the advice was that masks were ineffective; when it changed to say while they don't protect those wearing them from catching the virus, they will protect others if mask-wearers are carriers. It's possible that some people are not aware that the advice has changed, are unclear about the meaning of changing statewide rules, or don't realize that many localities, including Cambridge and Watertown have stricter regulations.

### **Statewide:**

[Governor Baker's statewide order](#)-- effective Wednesday, May 6 [requires face masks or cloth face](#) coverings in public places where it is not possible to be six feet away from other people. This applies to both indoor and outdoor spaces. It does not mean HAVING a mask--holding onto it at waist level or wearing it around your neck; it means wearing the mask, even outdoors, if you are less than six feet away from someone.

### **City of Cambridge:**

As of April 29, 2020, Cambridge [requires that face coverings be worn in all public places, businesses and common areas of residential buildings](#). The order took effective at Wednesday, April 29, and applies to everyone over the age of five years old, with exceptions in alignment with guidelines provided by the Centers for Disease Control or Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Violations may be punishable by a \$300 fine. It applies to: sidewalks, streets, parks, plazas, bus stoops, non-residential parking lots and garages, and any other outdoor area...which is open and accessible to the general public.

#### [Watertown:](#)

As of May 4, 2020 any individual who is age five (5) years or older, and not otherwise exempt per CDC guidelines, shall be required to cover their nose and mouth with a clean mask or face covering

(e.g. disposable mask, cloth mask, face shield, bandana, scarf) when in or at any location open to the general public including all indoor locations open to the public, outdoor premises of private locations open to the public, and all public outdoor locations (e.g., parks, playgrounds, athletic facilities, sidewalks, streets, public squares, paths, and all Town property).

Regulations in many other communities across the state.

<https://www.nbcboston.com/news/coronavirus/these-cities-and-towns-in-massachusetts-are-requiring-masks-and-face-coverings/2115307/>

Please help everyone—and yourself— stay safe.

—Anita M. Harris

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