



COVID-19: Non-Medical Masks and Face Coverings

Effective Thursday, July 23, 2020, in all communities in the Porcupine Health Unit area, it will be mandatory to wear a face covering in public indoor spaces. The use of a face covering does not replace the need for other public health measures such as physical distancing, frequent hand hygiene, and staying home if unwell.

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Common Questions about Non-Medical Masks and Face Coverings

How does a face covering work?

Wearing a face covering helps to trap respiratory droplets which can spread COVID-19 and protects people who are around you. Your face covering must be secure and have a snug fit around your nose, mouth and chin.

Do face coverings protect against COVID-19?

It protects those around you by trapping droplets which may contain the virus inside your mask. To protect yourself from COVID-19 everyone should: stay home as much as possible; avoid groups or crowded spaces; maintain a physical distance of 2 metres; wash your hands frequently; avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands; cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing with tissues or your sleeves; and wash your hands immediately after.

Why make face coverings mandatory now?

Reopening the economy means people are returning to work and taking more outings in the community. We were previously isolated at home, but now that there is more public interaction and so a higher risk for exposure to COVID-19. As people increase their contacts, the risk of a rapid rise in infections and outbreaks is ever-present.

Scientific evidence indicates that wearing face coverings in enclosed public spaces is an effective way to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

I thought we didn't have many active cases. Why should I bother wearing a face covering?

The situation is constantly changing. Even if there are no "identified" cases of COVID-19, that doesn't mean that it isn't in our communities or won't reappear. We also now know that COVID-19 can be spread by people without symptoms. A face covering is one way that you can help protect others.

Once a case is identified and exposure has occurred, it is too late, it is important we take all the steps that can help reduce the risk of infection.

How do I use a face covering properly?

Safely Putting ON a Face Covering

1. Wash your hands*
2. Put on the face covering, adjust it to face (cover nose and mouth)
3. Avoid touching the inside of the face covering
4. Do not share it with others
5. If it gets slightly wet or dirty, change your face covering for a new one.

Safely Taking OFF a Face Covering

1. Wash your hands*
2. Place it into lined garbage bin (if disposable)
3. Wash your hands again.

**Wash your hands before putting the mask on, before touching it or adjusting it, before taking it off and after taking it off.*

What type of mask should I wear? I've heard of masks and face coverings, what's the difference?

There are many types of masks or face coverings available. There are cloth masks that can be washed and reused; face coverings such as a bandana, scarf, or cloth; disposable masks that can only be worn once, and medical masks.

A face covering is a way to cover your mouth and nose to prevent droplets (from breathing, talking, coughing or sneezing) from contaminating others or landing on surfaces. A variety of items can be used as a face covering, including non-medical cloth masks, bandanas or scarves.

A medical mask includes surgical, medical procedure face masks and respirators (like N95 masks). These masks must be kept for healthcare workers and others providing direct care to COVID-19 patients.

Do not use plastic or other non-breathable materials as a face covering or face mask.

I am wearing a plastic face shield, is this okay?

When you wear a plastic shield, you do not have a snug fit around your nose, chin, and mouth. A face shield may provide extra precaution for the wearer against droplets from another person; however, these droplets can still be inhaled around the shield. Respiratory droplets from the wearer can also escape around the sides of the face shield, which provides less protection to others. If you choose to wear a face shield, you should do it in combination with a cloth mask.

Is a face shield a good alternative for someone who can't wear a mask?

A face shield is not a substitute to wearing a mask or face covering. It does not filter respiratory droplets and does not have a snug fit around the nose, mouth and chin. However, the WHO, (World Health Organization) supports the use of face shields as a "better than nothing" solution to face masks. At a minimum, the face shield should cover the sides of the face and extend below the chin.

What should I look for in a mask?

- 2 layers of tightly woven material such as cotton, flannel or quilting cotton
- 2 different colours of material so you know which side goes outward
- The more comfortable fabric should be on the inside, against the face
- No seams over the mouth and nose (air may leak through)
- Stay intact and maintain their shape after washing and drying
- A good fit around your nose and mouth that is secured around the head with ties or ear loops
- Note that a round elastic may fit more comfortably behind the ears than a wide, flat elastic

What about my child?

Children can be symptomatic (showing symptoms) or asymptomatic (without symptoms) carriers of COVID-19. Children over the age of 2 should wear a mask to protect those around them if it is difficult to maintain a distance of 2 metres.

Face coverings are not recommended for children under 2 years of age or wherever one cannot be worn safely. Once a mask is in place, children should not touch the mask, as doing so will increase their risk of contamination. If you believe your child can understand and follow the proper etiquette for wearing a face covering, encourage your child to wear one.

You can encourage your child by:

- Talking with your child
 - Explain why they need to wear a face covering
 - Listen to their feelings and concerns
- Choose a face covering with your child

- If you are able to, include your child in selecting it
- Include in play
 - Have a face covering available in their home environment so they can explore and play with them
- Remember - You are the role model, so wear your face covering too.

What to do if I cannot find anywhere to buy a face covering?

There are many alternatives to purchasing a mask, including making your own, or using a bandanna or scarf. The Porcupine Health Unit is currently working with community partners to share opportunities to obtain masks locally.

Instructions on Do It Yourself masks

Follow this link for instructions on how to make a mask. You will find instructions for both a simple sewing or "no sew" version:

- Non-medical masks and face coverings: [Sew and no-sew instructions](#)

Some tips for masks during hot weather

When a 2-metre distance cannot be maintained, wearing a mask will help reduce the spread of COVID-19. In extreme heat wearing a face covering can be uncomfortable. In an outdoor setting, a mask may not be necessary if you can keep 2 metres away from others.

Tips to beat the heat while wearing a mask:

- Plan your outing during the coolest time of the day.
- Move to shade or a cooler environment to take breaks from the heat.
- Take breaks.
- Decrease intensity of the activity performed.
- Keep a spare handy. You may need to change your mask more frequently in hot, humid temperatures as it may become damp more quickly.

Where do you need to wear a face covering?

The mandatory face covering policy applies to indoor areas only and includes, but is not limited to, the following types of places:

- convenience stores
- retail establishments, shopping malls and shopping plazas
- enclosed areas of grocery stores, bakeries and farmer's markets
- restaurants and bars
- indoor recreational facilities, sports facilities, sports clubs, gyms, yoga studios, dance studios, and swimming pools
- libraries
- community centres
- community service agencies
- personal service settings (such as esthetics salons, spas, hair salons, barber shops and nail salons)
- laundromats
- churches, mosques, synagogues, temples and places of worship
- art galleries, museums, aquariums and zoos
- banquet halls, convention centres, arenas, stadiums and other event spaces

- real estate facilities such as open houses, presentation centres
- common areas in hotels, motels and short-term rentals (such as lobbies, elevators, meeting rooms, rest rooms, laundry rooms, gyms and kitchens)
- entertainment facilities including concert venues, theatres, cinemas and casinos
- business offices open to the public
- public transit
- private transportation (e.g., taxis, limos, rideshares)

The following are not considered an enclosed public space:

- Spaces subject to provincial and/or local public health guidance:
 - Schools under the Education Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.2, as amended;
 - Child care centres and providers governed by the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014, S.O. 2014, c. 11, as amended;
 - Day camps.

Where will face coverings not be required?

Currently, the mandatory mask requirement applies only to enclosed public spaces.

Certain services, where it is not possible to wear a face covering, such as at the dentist, will allow you to temporarily remove it while you are receiving those services. Other situations include:

- When communicating with someone with hearing difficulties;
- Actively engaging in an athletic or fitness activity including water-based activities;
- Consuming food or drink;
- While receiving services to areas of the face that would otherwise be covered by a face covering, when and where any such services are permitted under the regulations;
- For any emergency or medical purpose.

What happens if I do not wear a face covering?

If you don't wear a mask or face covering in an enclosed public space (like a store), or if you are seen with your mask off for long period of times or you are not wearing your mask in a way that fully covers your chin, mouth and nose, you will be given a verbal reminder of the requirement to wear a mask.

Implementation of the policy will be enforced in 'good faith'. It will be primarily used to encourage the social norm and as a means to educate people on face covering use in public spaces.

What do I do if I see someone without a face covering?

There is currently no enforcement or fine for those who are not wearing a face covering. Please be respectful as some individuals may be exempt from wearing a face covering (see next section).

Do I need to show proof of exemption?

No one is required to provide proof of exemption from wearing a face covering. DO NOT ask for proof.

Who is exempt from wearing a face covering?

A face covering is not required for children under the age of two, those who are developmentally under the age of two or who cannot understand how to wear a face covering properly, individuals who have trouble breathing, people who are hearing impaired, those who are unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to put on or remove a face covering without assistance, and businesses not open to the public where employees can maintain physical distancing.

I have difficulty hearing and can't understand when someone is wearing a mask?

There might be situation where temporary mask removal will be necessary. When someone is deaf or has difficulty hearing, employees may have to remove their mask. Follow safe handling procedure when removing your mask and keep a distance of 2 metres from others. Re-apply your mask when the situation is resolved.

Do we still need to stay 2 metres away from others if I am wearing a face covering?

Yes. Wearing a mask is not an alternative to all the public health measures that are currently in place; physical distancing, staying home if sick, washing your hands, cough and sneeze etiquette, not touching your face, and cleaning commonly touched surfaces. It remains important to follow the guides and signs in the store or building (like the arrows on the floor, the 2 metres stickers or lines on the floor) to maintain a 2-metre physical distance.

Is there any situation where we are allowed to remove our mask?

We recognize that wearing a cloth mask may not be possible in every situation. It can worsen a physical or mental health condition or introduce safety concerns:

- When communicating with someone with hearing difficulties;
- Actively engaging in an athletic or fitness activity including water-based activities;
- Consuming food or drink;
- While receiving services to areas of the face that would otherwise be covered by a face covering, when and where any such services are permitted under the regulations;
- For any emergency or medical purpose.

** Ensure you wash your hands before and after removing your face covering.*

Can I remove my mask when I get in my vehicle in between stores?

Cloth masks can be reused throughout the day if not soiled or damaged. Wash your hands, remove the mask from your face and fold it in half. Fold it so the outer surface faces inwards so the contaminated surface is does not touch anything during storage. Place your mask in a clean, closed bag until you are ready to use it again on the same day. A paper bag or envelope is a good choice, since it will absorb moisture. Disposable masks should be discarded and not reused or re-washed.

Can I wear my cloth mask all day?

A mask can be worn all day if it does not become damp, damaged, or dirty. Do not place your mask in your pocket.

Myths about Masks and Face Coverings

Do face coverings cause CO₂ poisoning?

No. The prolonged use of face coverings can be uncomfortable. However, it does not lead to CO₂ intoxication. --Source: WHO

Do face coverings cause oxygen deficiency?

No. The prolonged use of face coverings can be uncomfortable. However, it does not lead to oxygen deficiency. -Source: WHO

Can I re-use my fabric face covering?

YES! If it can be cleaned, you should:

1. Put it directly into the washing machine or bag that can be emptied into the washing machine
2. Wash with other items using a hot cycle laundry detergent and dry thoroughly
3. Wash your hands after putting the face covering into the laundry.

FAQ for Mandatory Face Coverings – Business

I own a business, what is my responsibility now that face coverings are mandatory?

- Adopt a policy for your facility that requires customers who access your premises must wear a face covering that properly covers the nose, mouth and chin.
- Policy will be enforced in "good faith"
- Best efforts must be made to only allow entry to customers wearing facial covering.
- Remind customers upon entry that a mask is mandatory
- Have proper and clear signage before entering the facility
- No proof is needed for customers that are exempt from wearing a face covering.
- Ensure that all employees are aware of the policy

What do I do if someone is not wearing their face covering?

If your customer removes their mask for extended periods of time, give them a verbal reminder of the requirement to wear a mask under the policy.

How can I enforce the policy?

The policy will be enforced in "good faith" and is used to educate people on face covering in addition to physical distancing of two metres.

Can businesses require proof of exemption?

Individuals are not required to provide proof of exemption.

Can businesses turn people away?

No one should be turned away if unable to wear a mask (exemptions). As always, it remains up to individual business owners and operators if they wish to refuse entry to individuals who may not have an exemption and choose not to wear one.

However, we are hoping for respectful implementation and are trusting individuals will do what they can to protect themselves and others.

Let's remember to be kind to one another.

Can the customers remove their masks?

Temporary removal of a mask, where necessary, is permitted for the members of the public.

- When communicating with someone with hearing difficulties
- Actively engaging in an athletic or fitness activity including water-based activities;
- Consuming food or drink;
- While receiving services to areas of the face that would otherwise be covered by a face covering, when and where any such services are permitted under the regulations;
- For any emergency or medical purpose.

Will I be subject to a fine if customers or employees are not wearing a mask?

No, the policy is in place to educate the public on the importance of reducing the spread of COVID-19.

Are the employees required to wear a mask at all times?

If the employee works behind or within a physical barrier or in an area that is not designed for public access, a mask is not needed.

Additional Resources

- Ontario Ministry of Health: [Face coverings and face masks](#)
- Public Health Ontario: COVID-19 - [What We Know So Far About Wearing Masks in Public](#)
- Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC): [Preventing coronavirus](#)
- World Health Organization (WHO): [Advice on the use of masks in the context of COVID-19](#)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [Considerations for Wearing Cloth Face Coverings](#)
- PHU non-medical mask video on [YouTube](#)



Instructions to persons responsible for a business or organization permitted to open under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, R.S.O. 1990, and associated regulations

Wednesday, July 15, 2020: Order issued under Ontario Regulations 263/20, Section 4(2); and 364/20, Section 2(2); or as current, of the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act (EMCPA), requiring all members of the public and employees who enter or remain in an enclosed public space of the business or organization to wear a mask or face covering that securely covers their mouth, nose and chin without gaping.

[read more...](#)

In This Section

Mask Order : 2020-07-15

