

COVID-19 Update

Help us protect your family and community.



Do I Need to Wear a Mask?



Social media has been flooded lately with information about COVID-19, this time about masks – homemade, cloth, paper, and others. While there are some cool ideas on how to make masks, it's important to understand the benefit vs. risk.

Here is some information from the Public Health Agency of Canada website that answers some questions about masks.

It's very important to remember that Medical masks (such as surgical & procedural masks, N95 respirators) should be reserved for our health care workers.

Should I wear a mask to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

Non-medical masks have not been shown to protect the wearer from getting COVID-19. However, it can be an additional measure you take to protect others in the community from contacting your droplets, similar to using a tissue or sleeve to cover your own cough. In public settings where physical distancing is difficult, (e.g., grocery shopping, in close settings such as public transit), wearing a non-medical mask is one way to protect those around you.

Keep in mind that wearing a non-medical mask is not a replacement for proven measures of physical distancing.

Masks should be used by:

- Sick people to prevent transmission to other people. A mask acts as a barrier to stop a person's droplets from spreading to others when they cough or sneeze.
- Health-care workers and first responders. These groups wear surgical masks, eye protection, gowns, and gloves in order to protect themselves and other patients. During health-care procedures in which aerosol sprays may be generated (for example, when giving certain inhaled medications), health-care workers wear specialized masks.

Do non-medical (e.g. homemade or cloth) masks work?

Non-medical masks have not been proven to protect the person wearing the mask from COVID-19 infection. However, it can protect other people around you by acting as a barrier that covers your mouth and nose, preventing your droplets from reaching them or landing on surfaces they come into contact with. Using a non-medical mask is similar to covering your cough with tissues or your sleeve.

Any mask, no matter how efficient at filtration or how good the seal, will have minimal effect if it is not used together with other preventive measures, such as frequent hand washing, physical distancing, staying home as much as possible, and self-isolating when you are sick. Wearing a non-medical mask is not an alternative to these proven preventative measures but is an additional measure you can take to protect those around you.

There is a potential risk of infection to yourself and others with incorrect mask use, placement and when putting it on or taking it off. If you choose to wear a non-medical mask, it needs to be used safely.

How do I use a non-medical mask safely?

Non-medical masks or face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.

Masks can become contaminated on the outside or when touched by hands. There is a potential risk of infecting yourself or others with incorrect mask use, placement and when putting it on or taking it off. If you are using a mask to protect others, your droplets can accumulate on the inside of the mask and become a source of infection to others. If you are ill, a mask should NOT be a replacement for self-isolation but should be used when you cannot avoid being in the same space as other people.

If you choose to use a non-medical mask or face covering for any reason:

- Wash your hands immediately before putting it on and immediately after taking it off (in addition to practising good hand hygiene while wearing it) It should fit well (non-gaping)
- Do NOT share it with others
- Avoid touching the mask when using it. Avoid moving the mask around or adjusting it often
- Do not touch your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands, even when you are wearing a non-medical mask. This is one way you can get infected.



If a cloth mask or covering gets damp or soiled:

- Put it directly into the washing machine or a bag that can be emptied into the washing machine and then disposed of.
- It can be laundered with other items using a hot cycle, and then dried thoroughly

If a non-medical mask that cannot be washed gets damp, soiled, or crumpled:

- It should be discarded and replaced.
- Dispose of it in a lined garbage bin. Do not discard it where other people can come into contact with it, such as shopping carts or on the ground.

Masks alone will not prevent the spread of COVID-19. You must consistently and strictly adhere to frequent hand washing and physical distancing. Stay home as much as possible when you are healthy and self-isolate when you are sick.

Visit Canada.ca/coronavirus for more information on how to safely put a mask on or taking it off, how to wash cloth masks, or safely dispose of other non-medical masks (such as dust masks).

Thank you and Stay Safe!

Source: Public Health Agency of Canada

Note: This flyer is intended for information only. If you are experiencing any Covid-19 symptoms or have a question regarding it, contact your local health centre immediately.

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