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Ontario ⚗

Face coverings and face masks

Learn about face coverings and how to properly wear, fit, remove and clean your non-medical face mask.

About face coverings and COVID-19 (coronavirus)

The best way to stop the spread of COVID-19 (coronavirus) is by staying home and avoiding close contact with others outside of your household.

It is recommended that you use a face covering (non-medical mask such as a cloth mask) to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 when physical distancing and keeping two-metres' distance from others may be challenging or not possible, such as:

- public transit
- smaller grocery stores or pharmacies
- when you are receiving essential services

Face coverings will not protect you from getting COVID-19.

Medical masks (surgical, medical procedure face masks and respirators like N95 masks) should be reserved for use by health care workers and first responders.

Get a poster about face coverings (https://files.ontario.ca/moh-coronavirus-face-coverings-en-2020-05-20.pdf) .

Fit

Non-medical masks or face coverings should:

- fit securely to the head with ties or ear loops
- maintain their shape after washing and drying
- be made of at least two layers of tightly woven material (such as cotton or linen)
- be large enough to completely and comfortably cover the nose and mouth without gaping

Face coverings will not protect you from getting COVID-19. The best way to protect yourself is to:

- minimize errands to a single trip where possible
- avoid close contact with others and keep at least two metres from others outside your household
- wash your hands regularly (or using alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available)
- practice proper cough and sneeze etiquette (for example, sneeze and cough into your sleeve and avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth)

Who should not use face coverings

Face coverings should not be placed on or used by:

- children under the age of two
- anyone who has trouble breathing
- anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance

How to properly use face coverings

When wearing a face covering, you should:

- wash your hands immediately before putting it on and immediately after taking it off (practise good hand hygiene while you are wearing the face covering)
- make sure the face covering fits well around your nose and mouth
- avoid moving the mask around or adjusting it often
- avoid touching the covering while using it
- not share it with others

Face coverings should be changed when they get slightly wet or dirty.

Remove or dispose of face coverings

When removing a face covering, you should:

- throw it out into a lined garbage bin
- wash your hands

Do not leave any discarded face coverings in shopping carts or on the ground.

Cleaning

If the face covering **can be cleaned**, you should:

- put it directly into the washing machine or a bag that can be emptied into the washing machine
- wash with other items using a hot cycle with laundry detergent (no special soaps are needed), and dry thoroughly
- wash your hands after putting the face covering into the laundry

All face coverings **that cannot be cleaned** should be thrown out and replaced as soon as they get slightly wet, dirty or crumpled.

For more information, please read the Public Health Ontario (PHO) fact sheet (https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet/factsheet-covid-19-how-to-wear-mask.pdf?la=en) .

Summary dos and don'ts

Do:

- wash your hands immediately before putting on and immediately after taking off a face covering or face mask
- practise good hand hygiene while you are wearing the face covering
- make sure the face covering fits well around your nose and mouth

- avoid moving the mask around or adjusting it often
- avoid touching the covering while using it
- change the face covering or face mask when it gets slightly wet or dirty

Do not:

- share face coverings or face masks with others
- place on children under the age of two years or on anyone unable to remove without assistance or who has trouble breathing
- use plastic or other non-breathable materials as a face covering or face mask

Guidance for health care workers

[Personal protective equipment (https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/medical-devices/covid19-personal-protective-equipment.html)](https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/medical-devices/covid19-personal-protective-equipment.html) (PPE) is a garment or device worn by health care workers to protect themselves from infection when they:

- are in close contact with people who are infected
- can't maintain a safe physical distance
- do not have access to a physical barrier

PPE includes:

- surgical masks, also called procedural or medical masks, which prevent droplets and splashes from passing through the mask material
- respirators, such as the N95 respirator, which have a filter and seal around the nose and mouth to help prevent exposure to airborne particles
- gowns
- gloves
- eye protection, such as goggles or face shields

The type of PPE you need depends on the type of health care work you do. Health care workers who provide direct care to patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 need to:

- follow droplet and contact precautions
- use a surgical mask, isolation gown, gloves and eye protection

Learn more about Public Health Ontario's [PPE recommendations in health care facilities (https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/updated-ipac-measures-covid-19.pdf?la=en)](https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/updated-ipac-measures-covid-19.pdf?la=en) .

If you are a business or health care organization and you need PPE, you can [find a company or business association that supplies personal protective equipment (https://covid-19.ontario.ca/how-your-organization-can-help-fight-coronavirus)](https://covid-19.ontario.ca/how-your-organization-can-help-fight-coronavirus) .

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> [What you should do to help prevent the spread (https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-stop-spread#section-1)](https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-stop-spread#section-1)

[Sector-specific health and safety guidance to prevent COVID-19 in the workplace (https://www.ontario.ca/page/resources-prevent-covid-19-workplace)](https://www.ontario.ca/page/resources-prevent-covid-19-workplace)