

GUIDANCE FOR WEARING OF NON-MEDICAL FACE MASKS FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Overview

COVID-19 can be spread by infected individuals who have not yet, or who may never develop symptoms.

Masks, including homemade cloth masks or non-medical face masks, are another way to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 in areas where physical distancing (2 metres distance between individuals) may be challenging or not possible.

COVID-19 Risk Mitigation

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| <p>Why use a mask</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masks are another tool that complement – not replace other measures that have proven to be effective in slowing the spread of COVID-19 between people • Wearing a mask in public settings has not been proven to protect the person wearing it, however, it can be an additional measure you can take to protect others around you by preventing your respiratory droplets from contaminating people, surfaces and/or objects • If you use a mask incorrectly, you could accidentally spread infection, despite your good intentions. Therefore, it is critical you use and dispose of a mask properly • Wearing a mask should be used in combination with other measures such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ stay home when you're sick - immediately isolate if you have COVID-19 symptoms: cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose or sore throat ○ practice physical distancing ○ download and use the ABTraceTogether mobile contact tracing app while out in public ○ wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds ○ cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your elbow ○ avoid touching your face with unwashed hands |
| <p>When to use a mask</p> | <p>Areas where it may be difficult to maintain the 2 metre distance from other people not in your household (for prolonged period of times e.g. 15 minutes or longer). For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • public transit • grocery stores • pharmacies • hair salon and/or barbershop • airplanes • some retail stores |
| <p>When a mask should not be worn</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When it is dirty, ripped/torn or damaged in any way • For children under 2 years of age • Anyone that has trouble breathing |
| <p>How to wear a mask with ear loops or ties</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before putting on the mask, wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or alcohol-based hand sanitizer with a minimum of 60% alcohol. • Ensure your hair is away from your face. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A non-medical facemask can be safely worn by someone with facial hair • Check the mask for damage; if damaged, discard. • Open mask fully to cover from nose to below the chin. • Place over nose and mouth and secure to your head with ties or ears with ear loops (depending on the style of mask). • If the mask has a nose bar, pinch around your nose to reduce gaps between your face and the mask. • Adjust if needed to make sure your nose and mouth are fully covered. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid touching the mask while wearing it; if you need to adjust your mask, clean your hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizer or soap and water before and after you touch it. • Keep your nose, mouth and chin covered at all times, until you are ready to remove the mask. |
| <p>How to remove a mask with ear loops or ties</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove your mask if it becomes wet, torn, dirty or the ear loops/ties become damaged. • Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or alcohol-based hand sanitizer with a minimum of 60% alcohol before you remove the mask. • Do not touch the front of the mask. Remove using the ties or ear loops. • Dispose of your mask in a lined garbage bin and wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or alcohol-based hand sanitizer with a minimum of 60% alcohol. |
| <p>What <i>not</i> to do with your mask</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not touch your face under the mask • Do not use a ripped, visibly soiled or wet mask or if the ear loops/ties are damaged • Don't wear the same mask for a long period of time; it must be changed when it gets damp • Don't share masks with another person • Don't wear the mask below your nose or chin • Don't let the mask give you a false sense of security; masks are meant to be used to as an addition to other measures such as physical distancing wherever possible, and hand washing |
| <p>How to take care of your mask</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always store, use, re-use and/or discard your mask in accordance with the directions of the manufacturer, if they are available • Store your masks in a way that protects them from getting dirty or damaged (for example in a sealed and clean storage bag) • Place in a dry area in your home • Identify or label mask storage bags so masks are not used by others, accidentally |
| <p>What to consider before making or buying a cloth mask</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type of fabric or cloth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use multiple layers of tight woven fabric – 4 layers is optimal. ○ Use a combination of fabrics such as a high thread count cotton (e.g. 600-thread count pillowcases and cotton sheets) with spunbond polypropylene or polyester. ○ If possible, use different fabrics or colours for each side of the mask. This helps you to know which side faces your mouth and which side faces out. ○ Choose a fabric or cloth that can withstand frequent cycles through washing and drying machines • Laundering <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Place the cloth mask directly into the washing machine or a bag that can be emptied into the washing machine. Throw out the bag after you have used it to store used masks. ○ Launder with other items using a hot cycle, and then dried thoroughly. ○ Inspect the mask prior to reuse to ensure it has maintained its shape after washing and drying. ○ Perform hand hygiene immediately after handling a used mask. • Making your own mask <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There are many different ways to make a cloth mask. Health Canada provides instructions with sew and no-sew options and includes types of materials you can use. Visit Health Canada for more information • Buying a cloth mask <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Government of Alberta does not endorse any particular vendor of non-medical cloth masks. ○ Keep in mind that you should verify that the mask should have multiple layers of fabric, fit securely against your face, allow for clear breathing and have the ability to be laundered. |