

1. Why you should wear a mask

COVID-19 can be transmitted by people who have symptoms, and by people who are infectious but not symptomatic, in the two days before symptoms develop.

Health officials strongly recommend wearing a non-medical mask in the community, even if you have no symptoms. It is an additional measure you can take to reduce the transmission of COVID-19.

Masks should be worn when you are in an area where people outside your immediate household are present. Non-medical or cloth masks are important in situations, community settings, and all indoor public places where physical distancing is not possible or is unpredictable. This includes:

- Retail businesses, shopping centres and malls;
- Personal service businesses such as hair and nail salons and spas (except during services that require removing a mask);
- Restaurants and bars (except when eating or drinking while seated in designated areas);
- Places of worship and faith gatherings;
- Indoor sport and recreational facilities such as a gym, ice arena, gymnastics/dance facility, except while participating in physical exertion;
- Public areas of universities and colleges, such as libraries, elevators, hallways and student union buildings.
- Conference and reception venues;
- Municipal or provincial government locations offering services to the public;
- Common areas of office buildings such as lobbies, elevators and hallways, but not private offices or cubicles.

Wearing a mask in public can be considered an additional line of defense, but does not replace the need for other public health measures that are proven to prevent the spread of COVID-19:

- Stay home as much as possible, especially if you are sick.
- Practice physical distancing (maintain a minimum of two metres between yourself and others who are not from your household).
- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, or sanitize your hands with alcohol-based sanitizer for 20 seconds if you have no immediate access to soap and running water.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or the bend of your elbow.

Wearing a mask reduces community transmission of the COVID-19 virus. High levels of mask usage in other jurisdictions have been associated with reductions in COVID-19 cases. Many respiratory viruses peak in fall and winter when people spend more time indoors in close contact. In Canada and Saskatchewan, we are already seeing more COVID-19 infections during the fall and winter months.

It is important to note that masks are recommended for outdoor areas as well if two-metre physical distancing cannot be maintained or is unpredictable.

2. What kind of mask you should use

When making or purchasing a cloth mask/face covering, consider the following recommendations:

Cloth masks should be tailored to fit the user's facial features as much as possible, ensuring that the mask can cover the nose, mouth, and chin areas with few gaps. Additional information on materials to use when making a mask is available from [the Government of Canada](#).

- It is not recommended to coat the outside of a mask with substances like wax to create a barrier. This can make it more difficult to breathe and air is more likely to escape out of the sides of the mask.
- Bandannas and gaitor masks are not appropriate face coverings. They are ineffective at blocking respiratory droplets.
- Face shields are not recommended for normal everyday activities or as a substitute for cloth masks.

It is strongly recommended that you purchase and keep a supply of masks at home for personal use when a two-metre distance cannot be maintained or is unpredictable. Use them in public indoor spaces (retail areas, places of worship, schools, common areas in workplaces.) It is also a good idea to carry one or two masks with you in case you need to visit a public indoor place.

3. Tips on how to wear a mask

People should consider the outside of the mask as contaminated once they put it on.

- Avoid touching, adjusting or moving the mask around with your hands. It is important that the mask is the right fit and sits comfortably on your face.
- Don't share masks with others.
- Reusable cloth masks should ideally be laundered and dried on the highest heat settings at the end of the day.
- If your mask becomes wet, soiled or otherwise damaged, use a fresh one.

There may be ways to address challenges you have with wearing a mask. Try different styles of masks and practice wearing a mask for short periods of time at home. Canadians who choose to wear a non-medical or cloth mask need to understand their limitations and how to safely use them. Information on how to [make a non-medical mask](#), how to [properly put on or remove a non-medical mask](#), and [limitations of non-medical masks](#) can be found on the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#) website.