

FAQ for Wearing Masks and Face Coverings



The Ontario government has released [A Framework for Reopening our Province](#), which outlines the criteria for the loosening of emergency measures, and guiding principles for the safe, gradual reopening of businesses, services and public spaces.

In anticipation of Stage 3, the Grey Bruce Health Unit Medical Officer of Health will issue an order for mandatory mask or face covering use in commercial establishments. This frequently asked question (FAQ) document aims to provide more information on this future order as well as to provide information about face covering and mask use.

Why Is the Order happening now?

- **The Provincial Stage 3 reopening plan will include activities with the highest contact intensity and that require significant modifications to maintain public health and safety.**
- As more businesses and public spaces open, and people increase their contacts, the risk of a rapid rise in infections and outbreaks is ever-present.
- Accumulating epidemiological evidence indicates that the widespread use of face coverings by all persons decreases the spread of respiratory droplets. Expert opinion supports the widespread use of face coverings to decrease transmission of COVID-19
- The use of face coverings is recommended by the Chief Medical Officer of Health of Ontario and the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada in situations where physical distancing (spatial separation of individuals by at least two metres) is difficult to maintain.

- As of July 09, 2020, there is evidence of continued community transmission of COVID-19 in the jurisdiction of the Grey Bruce Health Unit, as evidenced by newly identified cases not connected to facility outbreaks or travel.
- COVID-19 is transmitted from person to person predominantly through respiratory droplets that are released from the nose and mouth, through contact with contaminated surfaces, and through poor hand hygiene.
- COVID-19 may be transmitted from persons who have minimal or no signs or symptoms of illness.
- COVID-19, a disease caused by a novel coronavirus, is designated as a disease of public health significance and a communicable disease pursuant to Ontario Regulation 135/18 under the Health Protection and Promotion Act.

What is considered a mask or face covering?

- “Mask” means: a medical mask or a non-medical mask or other face coverings such as a bandana, a scarf or cloth that covers the mouth, nose and chin ensuring a barrier that limits the transmission of infectious respiratory droplets.

Do masks or face coverings protect against COVID-19?

- Wearing a mask or face covering helps to trap COVID-19 if you are sick and protects people who are around you. Since persons may be transmitting the disease while having minimal or no signs or symptoms of illness, they should wear a mask. When other people wear a mask, they are helping to protect you as well.
- Mask wearing cannot guarantee protection from the virus and should not replace proven measures such as frequent handwashing, avoiding touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands, avoiding groups of people and crowded spaces, practicing physical distancing and staying at home if you are sick.

How do I properly wear a face covering/mask?

- Immediately wash your hands before putting the mask on, before adjusting it, before taking it off and after taking it off. Use soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to wash your hands.

- Make sure your mask allows for easy breathing and completely and comfortably covers the bridge of the nose, covers your mouth, fits snugly under your chin and against the sides of your face.
- Make sure your mask is secured to your head with ties or ear loops without the need to adjust frequently.
- If your mask has pleats, ensure that the pleats on the outside are facing down.
- If your mask has a metal strip over the nose, gently mould it over the bridge of your nose to ensure a close fit.
- Replace the mask as soon as it becomes damp, dirty, damaged or if it has shrunk after washing and drying.
- Do not share your mask with others, even within your own household.
- Masks are not all made the same and may fit differently. Find a mask that fits your face and learn how to wear your mask.
- To protect yourself and others from COVID-19:
 - [Cloth Masks and other Non-Medical Face Coverings in Retail Locations](#) - Grey Bruce Health Unit
 - [Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) - Video](#) - Grey Bruce Health Unit

How do I wash and reuse my mask?

- Wearing a mask or face covering can increase your risk of infection if you touch your face more frequently to adjust it or if you do not wash your hands before putting it on and taking it off. All parts of masks or face coverings can become contaminated by breathing or when touched by your hands.
- Masks or face coverings become contaminated, especially when touched by your hands.
- After washing your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, remove your mask by pulling the ties or ear loops away from your ears.
- If your mask has a removable, non-reusable filter, make sure to remove and throw out the filter before machine or hand washing your mask.
- For machine washing, put the mask directly into the washing machine or in a bag that can be emptied into the washing machine. Throw out the bag after you have

used it to store your mask. If the bag is washable, you can wash it with your mask. Wash your hands again with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer after handling your mask.

- Wash the masks with other laundry using a hot water cycle.
- For hand washing, use laundry detergent and water as hot as you can stand, then dry thoroughly.
- When discarding damaged or worn out masks, drop them in a lined garbage bin.
- Do not leave any discarded masks in places where others can be exposed to them such as shopping carts, public seats, and bus stops or on the ground.
- Cloth masks can be re-used throughout the day if not soiled and undamaged. With clean hands, remove the mask from your face and fold it in half so that the outer surface is inwards (so that the contaminated outer surface is not contacting anything during storage) and place it in a clean, sealable bag until ready to use it again the same day.
- Disposable masks should not be washed, reused or recycled.

Can a face shield be used instead of a mask?

- A face shield is not a substitute for wearing a facemask, as it does not filter respiratory droplets. A face shield may provide additional protection for the wearer against droplets expelled from another person, however these droplets may still be inhaled around the shield. Respiratory droplets expelled by the wearer may escape around the sides of the face shield, which therefore provides less protection to others. If you choose to wear a face shield, we recommend - if possible - to wear it in addition to a properly fitted cloth masks.

For those that cannot wear a mask, is a face shield a good alternative?

- A face shield would not be considered an equal substitute for a facemask as it does not provide filtering capacity. However, the World Health Organization (WHO) supports the use of face shields as a “better than nothing” alternative to face masks if there is a shortage of non-medical masks or for populations who

are not able to properly wear non-medical masks, such as individuals with a respiratory condition that prevents them from wearing a mask. The WHO makes note that face shields are inferior to face masks at preventing the spread of an infection through droplets and at a minimum should extend below the chin and cover the sides of the face.

What is the timeline for the order taking effect?

- This mask order will coincide with stage 3 re-opening. Notice will be given to all to prepare.

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

- Yes. The person responsible for a business that is open to the public, or an organization responsible for a facility that is open to the public, shall ensure that the place of business or facility is operated to enable members of the public in the place of business or facility to, to the fullest extent possible, maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from other persons. Wearing a mask is not an alternative to physical distancing. Every effort should be made to keep a 2-metre distance even when wearing a mask.

Does this order mean that masks must be worn in my apartment building or condominium?

- No. Mandatory mask directive issued by the Health Unit does not include residential buildings or condominiums. Residential building owners or condominium boards may choose to implement their own policies within their buildings.

Who does not have to wear a mask?

- PLEASE NOTE: self-declaration/parental declaration of the following is sufficient to be exempted from wearing face covering.

- The *Person* is a child under the age of two years; or a child under the age of 5 years either chronologically or developmentally and he or she refuses to wear a face covering and cannot be persuaded to do so by their caregiver;
- The *Person* is incapacitated and unable to remove their mask without assistance;
- Wearing a *Face Covering* would inhibit the *Person's* ability to breathe in any way;
- For any other medical reason, the *Person* cannot safely wear a Face Covering such as, but not limited to, respiratory disease, cognitive difficulties or difficulties in hearing or processing information.
- For any religious reason, the *Person* cannot wear a face covering, or cannot cover the face in a manner that would properly control source.

What happens if I do not comply with the order?

- Best efforts when restricting entry to customers wearing face coverings means the following:
 - Where an establishment has a person restricting occupancy into the premises, a verbal reminder that the customer should be wearing a face covering as a result of these instructions shall be given to any customer entering the premises without one. For greater clarity, there is not a need for a business to turn away the customer to achieve the best effort standard.
 - For customers in a premise seen removing their face covering for extended periods of time, a verbal reminder to that customer of the requirement to wear face coverings under these instructions.

Do I need to wear a mask outdoors?

- This order is only for indoor use; however, certain situations that you cannot practise personal distancing outdoors can warrant wearing a mask.

Who will enforce this rule?

- **Best efforts when restricting entry to customers wearing face coverings means the following:**

- Where an establishment has a person restricting occupancy into the premises, a verbal reminder that the customer should be wearing a face covering as a result of these instructions shall be given to any customer entering the premises without one. For greater clarity, there is not a need for a business to turn away the customer to achieve the best effort standard.
- For customers in a premise seen removing their face covering for extended periods of time, a verbal reminder to that customer of the requirement to wear face coverings under these instructions.

I cannot afford a mask; where can I get one?

- Organizations and business in Grey and Bruce Counties may be able to provide masks for no cost based on donations. For example, Bruce Power has donated 120,000 one-time masks to local organizations including Chambers of Commerce and Food Banks in support of ensuring people have access in support of the re-opening. In addition, over July and August, the company will distribute 30,000 re-usable masks through all employees, pensioners and a range of community organizations to support the need for masks in the community. Bruce Power is also launching a program called 'Strength in Numbers' where it will offer organizations its bulk buying power so smaller organizations have access to this lower pricing. For organizations that are looking for information on these they can email info@brucepower.com

If it is too hot to wear a mask, can I chose not to wear it?

- Yes. People are exempt for any other medical reason including heat-related health effects.
- Mask do not need to be worn outdoors, and most public places do have conditioned air to assist with the comfort of wearing a mask.

Who are the stakeholders that helped with consultation?

- Wardens, Mayors and municipal CAOs from Grey and Bruce Counties
- Chiefs of Police, Fire, and EMS of Grey and Bruce Counties

- Prosecutor for Grey and Bruce Counties
- Other stakeholders such as Ministry of Health, Emergency Operations Centre (Ontario), Chief MOH, indigenous chiefs, other health units
- Members of the public and private organizations, and business owners and operators
- MPs, MPPs from Grey and Bruce Counties
- Most importantly, the public, represented by individual citizens or through the above stakeholders

I still have questions, where can I call?

Individuals and commercial operators may contact the Grey Bruce Health Unit COVID-19 Helpline (519-376-9420 or 1-800-263-3456 ext. 3000) with specific questions or concerns.

Additional Resources

- [COVID-19: How to wear a non-medical mask or face covering properly](#) – Health Canada
- [Considerations for the Public on Wearing Face Coverings](#) - Grey Bruce Health Unit
- [Cloth Masks and other Non-Medical Face Coverings in Retail Locations](#) - Grey Bruce Health Unit
- [Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) - Updated for 2013](#) - Grey Bruce Health Unit
- [Resources to prevent COVID-19 in the workplace](#) – Government of Ontario
- [Preventing COVID-19 in the workplace: Employers, employees and essential service workers](#) - Public Health Agency of Canada
- [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): For businesses and employees](#) – Government of Canada

- [Risk-informed decision-making for workplaces/businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic](#) – Government of Canada