COVID-19 Guidance for Use of Face Masks and Coverings by the Public

Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) is a novel coronavirus that causes acute respiratory illness. Many people will have mild symptoms, though some will get very sick. For more information about COVID-19 visit Toronto.ca/covid19.

How Does COVID-19 Spread?

COVID-19 is most commonly spread from close contact with an infected person through their respiratory droplets from coughing, sneezing or talking. The virus is not spread in the air. Surfaces can be contaminated with the virus, including a person's hands. Someone may be infected without knowing it, even if they don't have symptoms.

To Help Reduce the Spread of COVID-19

- Stay home
- Only go out for essential trips like groceries, medicine, medical attention
- Practice physical distancing, including keeping two meters (or six feet) from others at all times (at home, at work, going for a walk)
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Cover your cough or sneeze with your sleeve or use a tissue, disposing of the tissue immediately
- Self-isolate if you are required or instructed to so by your healthcare provider or public health unit

Face Masks and Coverings

Wearing a face mask or covering may not protect you from COVID-19, but it may protect others from your respiratory droplets and germs. The best protection is to stay home, keep six feet from others and wash your hands often.

However, if you are unable to maintain a two metre (six feet) distance from others, such as on transit, in an elevator, grocery shopping or entering and leaving your apartment building, a face mask or covering can be used.

You can make your own mask with materials you already have at home (e.g. cotton t-shirt or pillowcase) or use a scarf or bandana to cover your face.

How to Safely Wear a Mask or Face Covering

✔ Wash your hands before putting it on and taking it off.
✔ Make sure it fits to cover your mouth and nose snugly; there should be no gapping
✔ Change your mask as soon as it gets damp or soiled
✔ Cloth masks can be laundered with other items using a hot cycle, and then dried thoroughly. If you wear your mask daily, it should be laundered daily.
✔ Discard non-reusable masks in a lined garbage.
✔ Clean surfaces that a dirty mask touches.
✗ Avoid touching your face and mask while using it.
✗ Do not share your mask with others.
✗ Do not leave your mask around your neck, hanging from your ear, or on your forehead.
✗ Do not put your used mask in your pocket because it is contaminated with germs. Put it in a plastic bag until you can wash it.
How to Safely Take a Mask Off

- Remove the mask without touching the side that faces outwards
- Put the mask directly in the laundry or a lined bin to be cleaned
- Wash your hands thoroughly

Who Should Not Wear a Mask or Face Covering?

Masks or face coverings should not be used for the following individuals:

- Children under the age of two
- Anyone who has trouble breathing
- Anyone unable to remove the mask without assistance

Wearing a Mask at Work

Follow instructions provided by your employer regarding the option of choosing to wear a non-medical mask or face covering.

Do Not Use Medical-Grade Masks

It is extremely important that we keep the supply of medical masks for healthcare workers where they are urgently needed for medical procedures, and to care for individuals who have COVID-19. Healthcare workers need medical masks, including N95 and surgical masks.

More Information

For more information about face masks and coverings, visit Canada.ca/coronavirus.