COVID-19: Use of Face Masks

Wearing a mask in addition to physical distancing and other public health measures can reduce the spread of COVID-19. Masks should always be worn when physical distancing is difficult.

Masks are required in Public Places
The City of Toronto By-law 541-2020, as amended by By-law 664-2020, requires everyone to wear a mask or face covering in all indoor public settings, including common areas in multi-residential buildings. The provincial government also requires that masks be worn in indoor settings under the Reopening Ontario Act.

Masks and Source Control
When we wear a well fitted mask, we are protecting others from our respiratory droplets. This provides source control to reduce the spread of germs into the air and on surfaces. Some masks, such as disposable medical masks, can also protect the wearer from infection.

Qualities of a Good Cloth Mask
• Masks should be made of at least two layers of tightly woven fabric (such as cotton or linen).
• A middle "filter" layer can provide extra protection.
• For masks with a pocket, you can add the filter layer using reusable non-woven polypropylene material paper towel or a disposable mask filter.
• For masks without a pocket, cut/unstitch one end and tuck a filter in between the two layers.
• Your mask should fit your face, covering your nose, mouth and chin without gaping.
• Your mask should be comfortable, easy to breathe through, and not limit your vision.
• Mask and ties/ear loops should fit securely to avoid adjusting during use.
• Choose fabric that can support a high temperature wash (e.g. cotton). Avoid stretchy material.
• Choose fabric that maintains the mask shape after washing and drying.

Visit the Government of Canada website for information on homemade masks.

Products Not Recommended
• A face shield is not an alternative to a mask as it does not protect others from your respiratory particles. A face shield may be worn with a mask as added protection for the wearer.
• Plastic masks do not protect others from your respiratory particles because they do not fit snug to the face.
• Masks with an exhaust valve can spread respiratory particles into the room. They do not protect others or limit the spread of COVID-19.
• Neck gaiters, scarves or bandanas are not well secured to the head or ears, making them more likely to move or slip out of place. They also do not cover the nose, mouth and chin securely without gaps.

Proper Use of a Face Mask
• Wash or sanitize your hands before putting on and after taking off your mask.
• Place the mask over your nose, mouth and chin without gaping.
• Change your mask if it becomes moist or dirty.
• Remove your mask by the ear loops without touching the front of the mask.
• Put your used mask in a plastic bag or directly in the laundry bin to be washed.
• Launder cloth masks after each use with other items using the hot wash cycle and dryer.

What to Avoid When Using Masks
• Do not share your mask with others.
• Do not re-use disposable masks.
• Avoid touching your face or mask when wearing it.
• Do not wear your mask under the nose, chin or forehead, or hang it from your ear.
• Do not put masks on children under the age of two.
• Do not put masks on people who have trouble breathing or who cannot remove the mask without assistance.

People at Greater Risk of COVID-19
People at greater risk of COVID-19 due to work or living situations, or those who are prone to severe illness from COVID-19 should consider using a three-layer mask. Medical masks can also be used, if available.

Workplace Requirements
The Reopening Ontario Act requires mask use, including by employees, in all indoor public settings. City of Toronto By-law 541-2020 requires operators create a mask policy. Cloth masks do not replace personal protective equipment (PPE) required in workplace settings.

People Unable to Wear Masks
We need to be respectful of people who are unable to wear a mask because of their age or medical condition. For businesses and service providers, consider offering alternative services to people who
are unable to wear a mask. Try virtual services, curb-side pickup or offer services during off-peak hours.

For more information, visit us at toronto.ca/COVID19 or call 416-338-7600.

Get fully vaccinated as soon as you can for the best protection against COVID-19. Learn more.