GUIDANCE FOR 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

Why use a mask	- 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: - staying home when you're sick - immediately isolate if you have COVID-19 symptoms: cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose or sore throat - practicing physical distancing - downloading and use the ABTraceTogether mobile contact tracing app while out in public - washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds - covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your elbow - avoiding touching your face with unwashed hands
When to use a mask	Areas where it may be difficult to maintain the 2 metre distance from other people who are not part of your household or cohort for prolonged periods of time (e.g. 15 minutes or longer). For example: - public transit - grocery stores - pharmacies - hair salons and/or barbershops - airplanes - some retail stores

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	- masks are mandatory for Grade 4 to 12 students and all school staff, as per CMOH Order 33-2020 - when mask use is mandatory by municipal bylaw; check your local community for details
When not to use a mask	- When it is wet, dirty, ripped/torn or damaged in any way - For children under 2 years of age - For anyone that has trouble breathing - If it's been used by another person
How to wear a mask with ear loops or ties	- Before putting on the mask, wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer with a minimum of 60% alcohol. - Ensure your hair is away from your face. - A non-medical mask can be safely worn by someone with facial hair. - Check the mask for damage; if damaged, discard. - Open mask fully to cover from over your 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 and to reduce gaps between your face and the mask. - Avoid touching the mask while wearing it; if you need to adjust your mask, clean your hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizer with a minimum of 60% alcohol or wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after you touch it. - Keep your nose, mouth and chin covered at all times, until you are ready to remove the mask.
How to remove a mask with ear loops or ties	- 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 disposable 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.
What not to do with your mask	- Do not touch your face under the mask – remove or adjust using the ties or ear loops. - Do not wear the same mask for a long period of time; it must be changed when it gets damp.

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	○ During cold temperatures, consider having a separate mask to put on indoors. - Do not share masks with another person. - Do not wear the mask below your nose or chin. - Do not let the mask give you a false sense of security; masks are meant to be used as an addition to other measures such as staying home if you are ill, physical distancing wherever possible, performing hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette. - Discard your mask in public by discarding it on the sidewalk or in a public washroom for example – use the garbage cans which are available.
How to take care of your mask	- Always store, use, re-use and/or discard your mask in accordance with the directions of the manufacturer, if they are available. - Hands should be cleaned before and after putting it on and taking it off. - Store your unused, clean re-usable masks in a way that protects them from getting dirty or damaged (for example in a clean, sealed storage bag). - After removing a reusable non-medical mask that will be re-worn prior to washing, it should be placed into a clean, breathable bag or container (allows for evaporation) for storage. - Do not reuse masks that are wet or soiled prior to laundering. A wet or soiled mask that requires laundering should be placed into a sealed bag (consider using a bag that can be washed) or container where it is stored until it can be taken home and washed. - Identify or label mask storage bags so masks are not accidentally used by others.
What to consider before making or buying a cloth mask	- Type of fabric or cloth ○ 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 spun bond polyproplylene 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 ○ Place the cloth mask directly into the washing machine or a bag that can be emptied into the washing machine. If the bag storing

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the used mask cannot be laundered or hand washed, it should be discarded into a garbage bin that is lined with a plastic bag.

- o Launder with other items using a hot cycle, and then dry thoroughly.
- o Inspect the mask prior to reuse to ensure it has maintained its shape after washing and drying.
- o Perform hand hygiene immediately after handling a used mask.
- Making your own mask
  - o 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
  - o 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, fits securely against your face, allows for clear breathing and have the ability to be laundered.