

# Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Non-medical Masks for Non-Health Care Settings

Personal and community control measures (i.e. hand hygiene, covering your mouth and nose when coughing/sneezing, physical distancing of 2 metres) should be adopted to suppress transmission of COVID-19. Masks may be required in situations when physical distancing cannot be maintained or a barrier cannot be provided.

Many businesses have questions about the different masks and when to use them. The table below provides information on different types of equipment and when they may be considered in the workplace.



## Respirator

(for example, NIOSH approved N95 disposable respirator)

### What is it?

- A Health Canada Class 1 medical device that provides a seal and a tight fit around the nose and mouth.
- It is a type of PPE that protects the person wearing it from exposure to biological aerosols that may contain viruses or bacteria, or other respiratory hazards.
- Designed to meet a performance standard, e.g., National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

### When should it be used?\*

- Required when workers may be exposed to hazardous airborne substances (particulate, vapours, biological hazards).
- They are not normally required for COVID-19 protection unless the procedure might cause large respiratory droplets containing COVID-19 to be aerosolized into tiny airborne particles such as during aerosol generating medical procedure (AGMP). AGMP is not common outside of health-care settings.

### How should it fit?

- Designed to fit tightly against the face.
- Respirators must be regularly fit-tested by an authorized tester to the wearer's face.
- Each time the respirator is applied it must be seal-checked to ensure appropriate protection.

\*Businesses should conduct a [hazard assessment](#) to identify existing and potential hazards related to COVID-19 to help determine what type of controls, including the use of PPE, should be used.



## Surgical/ procedure mask

### What is it?

- A disposable Health Canada Class 1 medical device that is not designed to fit tightly against the face.
- It is a type of PPE that provides the person wearing it a barrier protection against large-particle droplets, splashes, or bodily fluid, such as saliva.
- It also protects other people from droplets exhaled by the wearer through speaking, coughing or sneezing.
- Designed to meet a performance standard, e.g., American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM).

### When should it be used?\*

- May be required for workers who:
  - » may be exposed to splashes, large droplets, or saliva in the course of workplace duties, for example law enforcement officers with frequent public interaction, or
  - » are unable to maintain physical distancing (at least 2 metres of separation) between themselves and symptomatic individuals despite existing engineering and administrative controls, and a respirator is not needed, for example health-care professionals.

### How should it fit?

- Not designed to fit tightly against the face but should be adjusted to ensure nose and mouth are fully covered.

*\*Businesses should conduct a [hazard assessment](#) to identify existing and potential hazards related to COVID-19 to help determine what type of controls, including the use of PPE, should be used.*



## Non-medical procedure/cloth/homemade mask

### What is it?

- A disposable or reusable (if appropriate) mask that is not designed to fit tightly against the face.
- Intended to provide protection to others by containing the respiratory droplets or saliva exhaled by the wearer through speaking, coughing or sneezing.

### When should it be used?\*

- Recommended when it is not feasible to maintain physical distancing (at least 2 metres of separation) between coworkers, customers and the public where no COVID-19 symptoms are present.
- Employers may have a policy that requires workers or customers to use non-medical face masks.
- Examples include:
  - » personal service and wellness service workers (e.g. hairstylists, tattoo artists, estheticians, massage therapists) while working directly with clients (clients should also be encouraged to wear masks)
  - » wait staff and servers who cannot maintain physical distancing or a physical barrier
- See the [Alberta Biz Connect web page](#) for specific workplace guidelines.
- The general public should wear non-medical face masks in situations where it may be difficult to maintain a 2 metre distance from others not in their household (for example when shopping or riding public transit).

### How should it fit?

- Not designed to fit tightly against the face but should be adjusted to ensure nose and mouth are fully covered. See information on [non-medical masks](#).

*\*Businesses should conduct a [hazard assessment](#) to identify existing and potential hazards related to COVID-19 to help determine what type of controls, including the use of PPE, should be used.*



## Eye Protection

May include masks or respirators with integrated eye protection, safety glasses, goggles or face shields.

### What is it?

- A disposable or reusable (if indicated by manufacturer's specifications) device.
- It is a type of PPE that protects the eyes of the person wearing it from contact with splashes, sprays and splatter of bodily fluids from other people.
- In health-care settings, face shields and other eye protection are worn with a face mask so that the eyes, nose and mouth of the wearer are protected from the fluids of other people.

### When should it be used?\*

- May be required for workers who are or may be exposed to splashes, large droplets, or saliva in the course of workplace duties in addition to a face mask.
- Not commonly needed outside of health-care settings for biological hazards, such as COVID-19, but often used in workplaces where there are hazards which may physically damage the eyes or face.

### How should it fit?

- There is no current evidence that shows wearing a face shield alone adequately protect others from the wearer's respiratory droplets.
- Should not be used as a substitute for a face mask.

*\*Businesses should conduct a [hazard assessment](#) to identify existing and potential hazards related to COVID-19 to help determine what type of controls, including the use of PPE, should be used.*