Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Optimizing the Use of Masks Against COVID-19

Masking is one layer in a multi-layer strategy to maximize protection against COVID-19. Other layers include vaccination, staying home when sick, physical distancing, reducing close contacts, gathering outdoors or in well-ventilated indoor places, hand hygiene and regular cleaning.

Slowing the spread

- COVID-19 variants of concern (e.g. Omicron) spread very easily.

- Masks are one layer in a multi-layer strategy that help protect you and those around you.

- Select a high quality mask that fits snugly to your face and is comfortable to wear.

Qualities of a good mask

- Fits well. Completely covers your nose, mouth and chin. Fits snugly against the sides of your face with no gaps. A nose bridge wire can help to prevent air from leaking out of the top of the mask.

- Filters air well. When breathing, air moves through the mask and not around it.

- Can be worn comfortably and is easy to breathe through for long periods of time.

- A well fitted medical mask or a respirator (N95, KN95) may provide better protection for you and others but cloth masks are generally more comfortable to wear for longer periods.

Wear a mask when:

- In crowded places, such as large retail stores or event venues.

- In closed indoor spaces with poor ventilation.

- In close contact with people, other than your household.

Respirator

- Includes N95 and KN95.

- Provides best fit and filtration when fitted properly.

- May be uncomfortable for prolonged use.

- Non-fit tested respirators can be used as a high quality mask in the community.

- Respirators with exhalation valves should not be used.

Medical mask

- Can provide good fit and filtration.

- Includes surgical and procedure masks.

- Can be adjusted to fit face.

- Meets established filtration standards.

Cloth mask
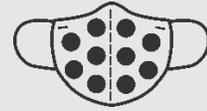
- May be less able to ensure good fit and filtration.

- May be more comfortable for prolonged use.

- Construction is variable but should be made of **3 layers** of high quality material.

Resources

- Look for Health Canada approved medical masks and respirators: Authorized Medical Devices for Uses Related to COVID-19.

- Public Health Ontario: How to Protect Yourself from COVID-19.

- Health Canada: COVID-19 Mask Use: Advice for Community Settings.

Learn about the virus

To learn more and access up-to-date information on COVID-19, visit the Ontario Ministry of Health' website: ontario.ca/coronavirus.

The information in this document is current as of December 24, 2021

Ontario