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 and By-law 542-2020 requires everyone to wear masks or face coverings 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 all wear a mask to cover our respiratory droplets it provides source control to reduce the spread of germs into the air and on surfaces. Some 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), and, if possible, a middle "filter" layer. A three layer mask can provide added protection.
• For masks with a pocket, add a disposable coffee filter, paper towel, or reusable filter cloth.
• 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.

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 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

Cloth masks do not replace personal protective equipment (PPE) required in workplace settings. The *Reopening Ontario Act* requires mask use, including by employees, in all indoor 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 service to people who are unable to wear a mask. Try curb-side pickup or offer services during off-peak hours.

Products Not Recommended

- A face shield is not an alternative to masks 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 and cannot be cleaned and disinfected between uses.
- Masks with an exhaust valve can make breathing more comfortable for the person wearing it, but it can spread respiratory particles into the room.

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

Download the COVID Alert app. It will send you an alert if you were in close contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19.

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