COVID-19: Using Non-Medical Masks

******This guidance is currently revoked. The University of Guelph has updated its requirements for masks worn on-site [1]. Faculty, staff students, contractors and visitors are required to wear a medical-style [2] mask when attending at U of G locations – cloth masks are not considered acceptable at this time. Refer to the EHS Guidance for Using Medical Masks [3] for further information.******

A non-medical mask must be worn when indoors including in cubicles, classrooms, hallways, washrooms, stairways, meeting rooms and other common spaces. A non-medical mask is also required when outdoors and unable to maintain 2 metres of distance from others. These requirements align with regulations and guidelines from public health authorities, including the Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (WDGPH) Section 22 Class Order [4].

The class order defines a face covering as “a medical mask or a non-medical mask that meets the Health Canada criteria of a mask that covers the mouth, nose and chin ensuring a barrier that limits the transmission of infectious respiratory droplets”.

A non-medical mask can include a non-medical disposable mask, or self-made or commercial cloth mask, made of at least 2 layers. Public health agencies continue to recognize well-fitting, properly worn 2- and 3-ply non-medical masks as an effective source control and protection from COVID-19 and its variants, and non-medical masks continue to be acceptable in public and workplace settings.

Commercial or self-made disposable or re-useable non-medical masks are not considered personal protective equipment (PPE) and must not be used in situations where PPE has been deemed necessary.

Faculty, staff and students who must work at a distance of **less than 2 metres from others**, are required to wear **medical masks**. Please refer to Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) guideline for “COVID-19: Working in Close Contact (less than 2 metres of others) [5]” for details on this requirement, including the difference between medical masks and non-medical masks.

Public Health authorities in Canada have not recommended respirators (e.g., N95) for use against COVID-19 in non-health care settings. An N95 respirator is a respiratory protective device designed to achieve a tight facial fit and efficient filtration of airborne particulate. The users of respirators at the University of Guelph are subjected to requirements of our Respiratory Protection Program [6], including health screening, annual fit testing, and training. Participants of the program must continue to wear the respirator required to perform the work task, as the respirator requirement takes priority over wearing a medical or non-medical mask.

When to Use a Non-Medical Face Mask

- A non-medical mask is required in most indoor environments even when 2 metre distance can be maintained from others or if separated by physical barriers such as cubicle walls and plexiglass.
- A non-medical mask or face covering is required in outdoor environments where 2 metre distance cannot be maintained.
- Under certain limited circumstances, it may be acceptable to remove a mask while:
    - Working alone in a private office with the door closed (others are not present)
    - Eating or drinking while maintaining 2 metres of distance
    - Exercising during a booked appointment in designated areas of the Athletics Centre
    - Outdoors and able to maintain 2 metres from others
    - Child under the age of 5

- The University has a supply of non-medical masks for supervisors to order from the Physical Resources stockroom.
- Individuals are also permitted to wear their own non-medical mask provided it is appropriate for the workplace and is properly laundered.

What is a Non-Medical Face Mask

- For the purpose of this guidance, “non-medical face mask” refers to various forms of self-made or commercial, disposable or reusable masks with at least two layers, made of cloth, other textiles or other materials.
- Neck gaiters, scarves, bandanas, clear plastic mouth shields, and masks with exhalation valves are not acceptable as non-medical masks. A mask that covers the mouth, nose and chin ensuring a barrier that limits the transmission of infectious respiratory particles must be worn.
- Unlike medical masks, non-medical face masks are worn for the purpose of source control (i.e., to protect others from potential infectious particles of the wearer) and do not meet the certification standards nor are they intended for use in health care settings or by healthcare professionals.
- Unlike N95 filtering facepiece respirators, non-medical face masks are neither designed to protect the wearer from exposure to airborne contaminants nor classified as personal protective equipment (PPE).

Why Use a Non-Medical Face Mask

- When worn properly, a person wearing a non-medical mask can reduce the spread of his or her own infectious respiratory particles. Non-medical masks do not provide complete protection against viral particles because of a potential loose fit and the materials used.
- Using a non-medical mask **COMPLEMENTS (but does NOT replace)** the following measures that prevent the spread of COVID-19 between people:
    - Self Screening:
        - Complete the University of Guelph COVID-19 Daily Screening Form [7] every day before coming to any University locations.
        - If you feel sick, DO NOT come to work and notify your Supervisor.
        - If you become sick while at work, STOP working, isolate yourself from others, notify your Supervisor and go home as soon as possible.
    - Physical distancing of at least 2 metres (6 feet) and/or a physical barrier between individuals.
    - Proper hand hygiene.
    - Respiratory etiquette by covering coughs or sneezes with a tissue or your elbow.
    - Frequent cleaning and disinfecting of work areas, especially the high-touch surfaces.

Who Should Not Use a Non-Medical Face Mask

- If you have a medical condition, disability, or impairment that impacts your ability to wear a non-medical mask and need accommodation, please contact:
    - Employees: Occupational Health and Wellness (OHW) at ohw@uoguelph.c [8]a and notify your supervisor. Please note that employees are not required to disclose their specific medical condition to their supervisor.
    - Students: Student Health Services at 519-824-4120, Ext. 52131.

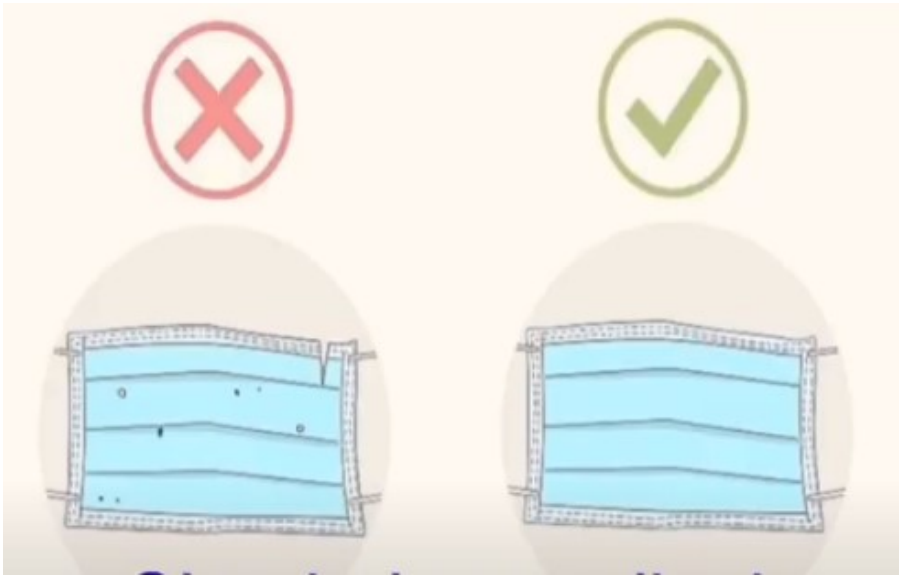
When a Non-Medical Face Mask Should Not be Used

- When it is damp, dirty, or damaged in any way.
- When it impairs vision or interferes with tasks.
- When a respirator (e.g., N95 filtering facepiece, half facepiece or full facepiece) is required as part of assigned personal protective equipment (PPE) and has been approved for performing the work safely (e.g., agricultural workers during spraying pesticides).

How to Wear a Non-Medical Face Mask with Ear Loops or Ties

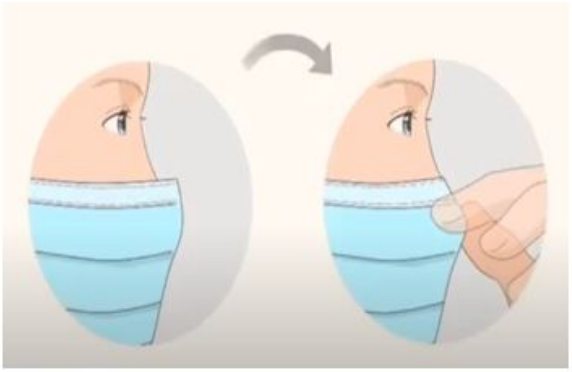
- Review and follow the Public Health's instruction video on "How to wear a non-medical mask or face covering properly [9]".
- Before putting on the mask, wash hands [10] with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer [11] with a minimum of 60% alcohol.
- Check the mask for damage; if damaged, discard.
- Determine the side of the mask. For disposable face masks, the coloured side is usually the front (i.e., side that faces out).
- Open the mask fully to cover from 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 mask.
- Adjust if needed to make sure your nose and mouth are fully covered.
- Avoid touching the mask while wearing it; if you need to adjust your mask, clean your hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizer or soap and water before and after you touch it.
- Keep your nose, mouth and chin covered at all times, until you are ready to remove the mask.
- Avoid lowering the mask to have it placed against your neck; instead remove and replace if necessary.











How to Remove a Non-Medical Face Mask with Ear Loops or Ties

- Remove your mask if it becomes wet, torn, dirty or damaged.
- Wash hands [10] with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or apply alcohol-based hand sanitizer [11] with a minimum of 60% alcohol.
- Do not touch the front of the mask. Remove using the ties or ear loops.
- If it is a reusable cloth mask, place it in a bag that can be emptied into the washing machine. Remember to wash hands [10] or apply alcohol-based hand sanitizer [11] afterward.
- Disposable face masks should not be reused and should be safely discarded after use. Dispose of it in a lined garbage bin and wash hands [10] or apply alcohol-based hand sanitizer [11] afterward.





What Not to do with your Non-Medical Face Mask

- Do not touch your face under the mask.
- Do not use a ripped, visibly soiled or wet mask or if the ear loops/ties are damaged.
- Do not wear the same mask for a long period of time; it must be changed when it gets damp.
- Do not share masks with another person.
- Do not wear the mask below your nose or chin.

How to Care for your Non-Medical Face Mask

- Always store, use, re-use and/or discard your mask in accordance with the directions of the manufacturer, if they are available.
- Store your re-usable masks in a way that protects them from getting wet, dirty or damaged.
- Identify or label the mask storage bag so the mask is not used by others, accidentally.

What to Consider before Making or Buying a Reusable Cloth Mask

- Type of fabric or cloth
    - Use multiple layers of tight woven fabric. 3 layers is recommended if making or purchasing a new mask.
    - Use a combination of fabrics such as a high thread count cotton (e.g. 600-thread count pillowcases and cotton sheets) with spun-bond polypropylene 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
    - Non-medical masks are not to be shared even after laundering.
    - Place the cloth mask directly into the washing machine or a bag that can be emptied into the washing machine. Throw out (if the bag is disposable) or wash (if the bag is washable) the bag after you have used it to store the used mask.
    - mechanical laundering with other items using a hot cycle, and then thoroughly drying is considered appropriate.
    - Inspect the mask prior to reuse to ensure it has maintained its shape after washing and drying.
    - Perform hand hygiene immediately after handling a used mask.
- Making your own mask
    - There are many different ways to make a cloth mask. PHAC provides instructions with sew and no-sew options and includes types of materials you can use.
- Buying a cloth mask
    - You should verify that the mask has multiple layers of fabric, fit securely against your face, allows for clear breathing and has the ability to be laundered.
- Fit
    - Non medical masks should:
        - Completely cover the nose, mouth and chin without gaping
        - Allow for easy breathing
        - Not contain an exhalation valve
        - Fit securely to the head
        - Fit comfortable to avoid frequent adjustments
        - Maintain its shape after washing and drying

Additional Resources on the Use of Non-Medical Masks

- Public Health Agency of Canada, Risk-informed decision-making guidelines for workplaces and businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic [12].
- Public Health Agency of Canada, Non-medical masks and face coverings: About [13]
- Government of Alberta, Guidance for Wearing of Non-medical Face masks for the General Public [14].

- University of Guelph, COVID-19 Tools and Resources [15].
- Public Health Wellington Dufferin Guelph, Wear and Care of Face Covering [16]

For any concerns or inquiries related to COVID-19 and working safely, please contact Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) at ehs@uoguelph.ca [17] or Occupational Health and Wellness (OHW) at ohw@uoguelph.ca [8].

Source URL:https://www.uoguelph.ca/hr/about-hr/environmental-health-safety-ehs/ehs-programs-policies-guidelines-and-forms/ehs-0

Links
[1] https://news.uoguelph.ca/return-to-campuses/practices/#mask [2] https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/publications/diseases-conditions/types-masks-respirators/types-masks-respirators.pdf [3] https://www.uoguelph.ca/hr/about-hr/environmental-health-safety-ehs/ehs-programs-policies-guidelines-and-forms/ehs-24 [4] https://www.wdgpublichealth.ca/your-health/covid-19-information-public/current-public-health-measures-and-restrictions/section-22 [5] https://www.uoguelph.ca/hr/about-hr/environmental-health-safety-ehs/ehs-programs-policies-guidelines-and-forms/ehs-22 [6] https://www.uoguelph.ca/hr/system/files/Respiratory%20Protection%20Program%20-%20AODA%20November%2025%202020.pdf [7] https://uoguelph.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6lh1bNRMHDEU1OR [8] mailto:ohw@uoguelph.ca [9] https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/video/covid-19-wear-non-medical-mask-face-covering-properly.html [10] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o9hjmqes72I [11] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sDUJ4CAYhpA [12] https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/guidance-documents/risk-informed-decision-making-workplaces-businesses-covid-19-pandemic.html [13] https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks/about-non-medical-masks-face-coverings.html [14] https://www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/covid-19-guidance-for-wearing-non-medical-masks.pdf [15] https://www.uoguelph.ca/hr/covid-19-tools-and-resources [16] https://wdgpublichealth.ca/your-health/covid-19-information-public/face-coverings-faqs/wear-and-care-face-coverings [17] mailto:ehs@uoguelph.ca