

## COVID-19: Considerations for Masks and Face Shields

Masks must be worn when indoors, including in cubicles, classrooms, hallways, washrooms, stairways, meeting rooms and other common spaces. Masks are 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.

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”.

In accordance with WDGPH [Section 22 Order](#) [1], neck gaiters, scarves, bandanas, clear plastic mouth shields, and masks with exhalation valves are not acceptable forms of face coverings. A mask that covers the mouth, nose and chin ensuring a barrier that limits the transmission of infectious respiratory particles must be worn.

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 "[COVID-19: Working in Close Contact \(less than 2 metres of others\)](#) [2]" for details on this requirement, including the difference between medical masks and non-medical masks.

For individuals who are able to maintain 2 metres from others, a disposable or reusable non-medical mask is still acceptable. 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.

The University of Guelph recognizes that some employees may not be able to wear a mask for medical reasons. The employees who have a medical condition that impacts their ability to wear a mask need to contact Occupational Health and Wellness (OHW) at [ohw@uoguelph.ca](mailto:ohw@uoguelph.ca) [3] and notify their supervisor. Please note that employees are not required to disclose their specific medical condition to their supervisor.

**If OHW determines that the employee is unable to wear a medical or non-medical mask, an alternative to a mask will be considered and/or an appropriate workplace accommodation.** Public Health sources (including [WDG Public Health](#) [4] and [Public Health Ontario](#) [5]) state that they do not recommend a face shield as a substitute for a mask, but its use has been considered in certain circumstances (e.g., medical reasons). According to the Public Health sources, the limitations of the face shields, compared to masks, are as follows:

- The face shield does not filter respiratory particles expelled or inhaled by the wearer.
- It does not fully cover the mouth, nose, and chin of the wearer.
- It is thought to provide less protection for others as the respiratory particles from the wearer may escape around the sides of the face shield

Should a face shield be recommended to an employee by OHW, the following conditions need to be met:

- Face shields must cover the forehead, extend below the chin and cover the sides of the face.
- If the job tasks requires Canadian Standards Association (CSA)-approved safety glasses a face shield that is not CSA-approved must not be used as a substitute.
- If the job task requires CSA-approved goggles, a face shield should not be used as a substitute even if CSA-approved.
- The material used for the visor (i.e., part of the face shield that covers the face) needs to be impenetrable by splashes, sprays, and spatter of body fluids.
- Wearing the face shield must not create a health hazard (e.g., skin irritation, allergic reaction etc.) or a safety hazard (e.g., poor visibility, sharp edges, etc.) of its own.
- The face shield must be adequately replaced, cleaned, and/or disinfected.

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A face shield or goggles, in conjunction with a medical mask is considered COVID-19 personal protective equipment (PPE) and is required for employee groups in specific work settings with close contact with others (where no barriers are present) and/or potential positive cases, e.g., Health and Performance Centre, Student Health Services and Child Care and Learning Centre. Please refer to the EHS Guideline [COVID-19: Working in Close Contact \(less than 2 metres of others\)](#) [2] for more information regarding the use of face shields in these situations.

[Physical Resources Stockroom](#) [6] has a supply of reusable face shields that can be reused following appropriate disinfection, as well as a disposable face shield option, that may be discarded after use. [Guidance on cleaning and disinfection of eye protection](#) [7] (including a face shield) is available on the EHS COVID-19 Guidelines Website. The information in this document is current as of June 1, 2021 and subject to change pending the future guidelines from the Public Health. For any concerns or inquiries related to COVID-19 and working safely, please contact Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) at [ehs@uoguelph.ca](mailto:ehs@uoguelph.ca) [8] or Occupational Health and Wellness (OHW) at [ohw@uoguelph.ca](mailto:ohw@uoguelph.ca) [3].

**Source URL:** <https://www.uoguelph.ca/hr/about-hr/environmental-health-safety-ehs/ehs-programs-policies-guidelines-and-forms/ehs-1>

### Links

[1] [https://www.wdgpulichealth.ca/sites/default/files/class\\_order\\_face\\_coverings\\_-\\_march\\_15\\_2021.pdf](https://www.wdgpulichealth.ca/sites/default/files/class_order_face_coverings_-_march_15_2021.pdf)

[2] <https://www.uoguelph.ca/hr/about-hr/environmental-health-safety-ehs/ehs-programs-policies-guidelines-and-forms/ehs-22>

[3] <mailto:ohw@uoguelph.ca>

[4] <https://www.wdgpulichealth.ca/your-health/covid-19-information-public/face-coverings-class-order-and-faqs#faceshields>

[5] <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/main/2020/07/covid-19-face-shields-source-control.pdf?la=en>

[6] <https://www.pr.uoguelph.ca/signage-and-hygiene-supplies-covid-19>

[7] <https://www.uoguelph.ca/hr/about-hr/environmental-health-safety-ehs/ehs-programs-policies-guidelines-and-forms/ehs-21>

[8] <mailto:ehs@uoguelph.ca>