

# FAQs- WEARING MASKS OR FACE COVERINGS WITHIN ENCLOSED PUBLIC SPACES - SHUTDOWN

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This document provides guidance and clarity for areas in the Shutdown zone by following [O.Reg 82/20 Rules for Areas in Stage 1](#) under *Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act*.

Please continue to check the [SMDHU website](#) frequently. With the rapidly changing case count and risk level for COVID-19, regulations and recommendations are changing regularly and without notice.

## What are we being asked to do?

The Province of Ontario requires the use of masks or [face coverings](#) as a means of source control in the indoor premises of all businesses, public settings, organizations and their vehicles, with some exceptions. This means when you enter into a public indoor space or workplace (even those not open to the public); common areas of apartment buildings, condominium buildings, and student residences; or if you use public transit (e.g. bus, taxis or rideshare), you are required to wear a mask or face covering.

More information can be found in the amended [Reopening Ontario Act, 2020 \(ROA\)](#) and associated regulations, as well as the [instructions](#) issued by SMDHU's medical officer of health (MOH). The instructions issued by SMDHU's MOH require public health measures be taken in addition to those in the ROA and associated regulations and are specifically intended for businesses and workplaces. Where there is overlap, the amended [Reopening Ontario Act, 2020 and associated regulations](#) will be applied first.

## Under what authority were the SMDHU instructions issued?

The instructions were issued by the medical officer of health of the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit under the authority of the ROA and/or its associated regulations, as amended. These instructions are in addition to the mask/face covering requirements found within the ROA.

## How long must people comply with these instructions?

Masks or face coverings are required indoors until further notice in all businesses, organizations, their vehicles and public transit services in Simcoe County and the District of Muskoka. These instructions are further supported in the requirements of the ROA and/or its regulations as amended for the wearing of masks or face coverings in indoor premises of businesses or organizations or in vehicles operating as part of the business or organization. When driving alone in a vehicle, a mask or face covering is typically not required.

## What type of business or organizations are included?

All businesses, organizations and public transit are included that have indoor spaces that are openly accessible to members of the public and/or are used to offer goods or services to members of the public. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Retail stores, shopping malls, shopping plazas (e.g. convenience stores, grocery stores and bakeries)
- Indoor farmers' markets and flea markets
- Gas stations
- Mechanic shops, garages and repair shops
- Showrooms
- Presentation centre or facility for real estate purposes
- Churches, mosques, synagogues, temples or other places of worship
- Municipal facilities (e.g. libraries, community centres)
- Common areas of commercial buildings, hotels, motels and other short-term rentals, such as lobbies, elevators, meeting rooms or other common use facilities
- Public and private transportation services such as buses, trains, taxis, shuttles, limousine services, and other similar ride-share programs
- Organization, government and business offices (publicly accessible areas), including spaces where training is being provided to the public

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Wearing of masks or face coverings within a school or private school must be done as required in the [Guide to reopening Ontario's Schools](#) issued by the Ministry of Education and approved by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health - please review with your school or school board the current direction on wearing of masks or face coverings.

For a list of exceptions to the face covering/mask requirement, please refer to the [Province's website](#) or section 2.(4) under Schedule 12 (General Rules for Shutdown zone) of [Ontario Regulation 82/20](#).

## What are some examples of how businesses, organizations and public transit services can enact the instructions?

- Post appropriate visible signage indicating that masks or face coverings are required inside the establishment. Public signage is available on our [website](#) to download and print.
- When a person not wearing a mask or face covering enters the premise or is seen removing their mask or face covering for extended periods of time, a verbal reminder should be given of the requirement to keep on their mask or face covering.
- In situations where someone may require an employee to remove their mask or face covering to speak to them (e.g. for a specific communication need like lip reading), we remind anyone removing their mask or face covering to follow safe handling procedures and to keep a distance of 2 metres (6 feet) away from others. *Note:* the customer entering the premises may have an exemption and be unable to wear a mask or face covering. It is recommended that the customer be reminded of the policy instead of being turned away. All exemptions should be enacted and enforced in "good faith" and should be used as a means to educate people on the use of masks or face coverings. The business, organization or public transit service should continue to follow physical distancing and hand hygiene protocols.

## Do employees of the business, organization or public transit service need to wear a mask or face covering?

Yes, employees need to wear a mask or face covering when working in the public areas of the indoor public space unless the employee is within or behind a physical barrier (e.g. Plexiglas barrier) or is in an area of the premises that is not designated for public access.

## What kind of mask or face covering can customers or employees wear?

- Customers or employers must wear masks (medical or non-medical) or face coverings that cover the mouth, nose and chin, ensuring a barrier that limits the spread of respiratory droplets when you cough, sneeze or talk.
- Face coverings or masks should:
  - be made of at least two layers of tightly woven material (such as cotton or linen)
  - be large enough to completely and comfortably cover the nose, mouth and chin without gaping
  - fit securely to the head with ties or ear loops
  - maintain their shape after washing and drying
- Face shields, neck gaiters, scarves and bandanas are not recommended masks/face coverings.
- For more information about masks/face coverings, visit the [Province of Ontario's](#) website.

## What added protections are required to protect employees?

- Ensure all employees are aware of the policy and are trained on your establishment's expectations.
- For the indoor area of the premises that is accessible to members of the public, ensure each worker wears a mask or face covering that forms a barrier with the skin in a manner that covers their mouth, nose and chin, and as best as possible, maintains a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from every other person while in the indoor area.
- If an employee is providing direct care to a suspect or confirmed case of COVID-19, regardless of where in the premises this occurs, ensure the employee wears appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

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- If an employee, in the course of providing a service indoors, is required to come within 2 metres (6 feet) of another person who is not wearing a mask/face covering and there is no separation (by physical barrier) between the employee and the other person, the employee needs to wear PPE that provides protection of the person's eyes, nose and mouth.
- It is also required that masks or face coverings be worn if physical distancing cannot be maintained outdoors.

## What is considered adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) for COVID-19?

- Personal protective equipment (PPE) is used alone or in combination to prevent exposure to COVID-19 and places a barrier between the infectious source and a person's own mucous membranes, airways, skin and clothing.
- The selection of PPE is based on the nature of the interaction with the client/customer and the known modes of COVID-19 transmission.
- At a minimum in businesses & workplaces, PPE for COVID-19 prevention would include a medical mask and eye protection. A face shield is not a replacement for a medical mask. Those providing direct care (e.g. helping with bathing, feeding, diapering) may require additional PPE.
- Provincial PPE supply information is available [here](#).

## Are 3 layer non-medical masks better than 2 layer masks?

- When seeking to obtain a new non-medical mask, a homemade or purchased 3 layer non-medical mask is recommended.
- Existing 2 layer masks do not need to be discarded and can continue to be used if they are in good condition and fit properly. All masks should be tightly fitted to cover the nose, mouth and chin.
- Three-layer non-medical masks with a disposable or reusable filter-type layer may offer greater filtration compared to a 2-layer non-medical mask with no filter and are currently also recommended by the the Public Health Agency of Canada and World Health Organization.

## Where does a mask or face covering need to be worn in multi-unit housing buildings?

Such buildings are typically restricted to the public without approved entry. Masks or face coverings are required in common areas (e.g. elevators, reception areas) of private and secured residential buildings, including apartment buildings, condominiums and student residences in which persons are unable to maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from other persons.

## Who is exempt from wearing a mask or face covering?

Some people may not be able to wear a mask or face covering. It is best to not be judgmental of individuals and to not make assumptions about those you see without masks/face coverings. For a list of exceptions to the face covering/mask requirement, please refer to the [Province's website](#) or section 2.(4) under Schedule 1 (General Rules for Shutdown zone) of [Ontario Regulation 82/20](#).

## Can a customer be refused entry if they are not wearing a mask or face covering?

- Although businesses, organizations or public transit services have the right to deny entry to their premise, we are asking the policy regarding the use of masks and face coverings indoors be enacted in "good faith" and be used as a means to educate people on mask or face covering use.
- Best effort standard means that businesses ensure customers are reminded that they should wear a mask/face covering at all times when in indoor public spaces. There is no need for a business to turn away customers to achieve the best effort standard; however, they can turn someone away if they choose to.
- In order to not stigmatize people who cannot use masks or face coverings, consider providing and promoting alternate ways of providing your products/services for them.

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## Can businesses require proof of exemption?

No, a person does not have to show proof of their exemption. There is no need for an exemption card or a letter from a physician.

## Is my business required to provide masks or face coverings for customers who may not have one?

No, it is not required that you provide free masks/face coverings for your customers.

## Does a person still need to stay 2 metres (6 feet) away from others if they are wearing a mask or face covering?

Yes. All public health measures must still be maintained and promoted including washing your hands often with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand sanitizer with 60-90% alcohol content, sneezing and coughing into your sleeve, staying home if you are ill and practising physical distancing to reduce exposure to other people — this means staying at least 2 metres (6 feet) away from anyone outside your household.

## When can a customer or employee remove their mask or face covering?

A customer is allowed to temporarily remove their mask/face covering where necessary for the purposes of:

- receiving services or
- while actively engaging in an athletic or fitness activity, including water-based activities.

An employee may remove their mask or face covering when stationary in a physically distanced staff-only area where the public does not have access. If staff are moving around in a staff-only area they should still wear a face covering, even if physically distancing.

## Does this policy apply to staff providing lifesaving functions?

No, it does not apply to emergencies or other situations where putting on a mask or face covering would jeopardize safety of an individual or the public.

## Who is responsible for enforcing this requirement and is there a penalty for non-compliance?

- Under the ROA, enforcement of these requirements may be conducted by police officers as well as provincial offences officers (which includes municipal law enforcement officers and public health enforcement personnel).
- Individuals, businesses or organizations who do not comply with the mask and face covering requirements may be fined as well as non-compliant patrons.
- Individuals may be liable for a fine of \$750 - \$1,000 up to a maximum of \$100,000, while corporations may be liable for a fine of up to \$10,000,000 for each day or part of each day on which the offence occurs or continues.

## Are religious officiants exempt from wearing a mask or face covering when leading a religious service/ceremony?

Face coverings or masks must be worn by everyone inside the place of worship at all times unless it is reasonably required to temporarily remove the mask or face covering for services provided by the religious officiant or other designated member. Please refer to the [Places of Worship](#) guidance document for more details.

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## Is a mask or face covering required to be worn by a speaker during public speaking engagements?

- Masks or face coverings must be worn by everyone inside the business or organization at all times unless it is reasonably required to temporarily remove the mask or face covering for services provided by the business or organization (such as speaking or singing).
- For loud speaking or singing, masks or face coverings may only be removed if there is a sufficient barrier (e.g. Plexiglas) between the speaker(s)/singer(s) and others. If a microphone is being used during speaking or singing, it must be disinfected between users.

## Are singers and other performers required to wear masks or face coverings during rehearsals and performances?

- Performances, singing and dancing are prohibited in some establishments when SMDHU is in the Shutdown zone. The following guidance applies for premises where singers and other performances are permitted:
  - Singers or performers (e.g. musicians, actors) do not need to wear a mask or face covering while they are rehearsing or performing, but singers and players of brass or wind instruments must be separated from any other performers by plexiglass or some other impermeable barrier.
  - Every performer and other person who provides work for the business or place must maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from every other person, except, if it is necessary for the performers to be closer to each other for the purposes of the performance or rehearsal.
  - During periods of rest in between performances, masks or face coverings should be used.

## When do masks or face coverings need to be used at weddings?

- In any location, physical distancing of at least 2 metres (6 feet) is still required for everyone in attendance unless they are from the same household.
- In addition to physical distancing requirements, mask or face covering requirements also apply to all people attending indoor ceremonies and receptions ([see SMDHU's guidance for indoor and outdoor events and gatherings](#)).
- If photos are being taken at the event, the photographer must maintain physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from those being photographed and wear a mask or face covering if the photos are indoors, or if they are unable to maintain physical distancing while outdoors. The studio or area where photographs are to be taken must be configured and operated in such a way as to enable persons in the studio or area to maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from other persons, except where necessary for the taking of the photographs.