

FAQ'S- WEARING NON-MEDICAL MASKS OR FACE COVERINGS WITHIN ENCLOSED PUBLIC SPACES

Last Revised December 14, 2020

Effective November 7, 2020, the Province of Ontario implemented the [Keeping Ontario Safe and Open Framework](#) which guides public health restrictions based on COVID-19 transmission in the province. Changes have been made to [Regulations under the Reopening Ontario \(A Flexible Response to COVID-19\) Act to guide public health restrictions including the use of face coverings within enclosed public spaces](#). Given that regulations and recommendations around COVID-19 are changing regularly, please visit the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit's website often.

REVISED - What are we being asked to do?

As of Saturday, October 3, 2020, the Province of Ontario requires the use of non-medical [masks or face coverings](#) as a means of source control in the indoor premises of all businesses and organizations and their vehicles, with some exceptions. These regulatory requirements are in addition to the [Letter of Instructions to Persons Responsible for a Business or Organization Permitted to Open under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, R.S.O. 1990 and associated Regulations](#) still in place from the Medical Officer of Health.

Although, the SMDHU [instructions](#) for non-medical masks or face coverings will remain in effect, the amended [Reopening Ontario Act, 2020 regulations](#) related to non-medical masks or face coverings will be applied first. As well please see the [Letter of Instruction for businesses and organizations for additional COVID-19 Public Health Measures](#).

Under what authority were the SMDHU instructions issued?

The instructions were issued by the Medical Officer of Health of Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit under the authority of the Reopening Ontario Act and/or its Regulations, as amended. These instructions are in addition to the masking or face covering requirements found within the ROA.

How long must people comply with these instructions?

Non-medical 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 Reopening Ontario Act and/or its Regulations, as amended for the wearing of non-medical masks or face coverings in indoor areas of a premises of a business or organization, or in a vehicle that is operating as part of the business or organization. When driving alone in a vehicle a mask 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 are used for the purposes of offering goods or services to members of the public and currently include, but not limited to, the following:

- Wearing of non-medical 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 non-medical masks or face coverings.
- Places where goods and services are sold:
 - Retail stores, shopping malls, food courts, shopping plazas (e.g. convenience stores, grocery stores and bakeries)
 - Indoor farmers' markets and flea markets
 - Gas stations
 - Mechanic shops, garages and repair shops
 - Personal service settings (e.g. salons, spas, tattoo parlours, etc.)
 - Showrooms
 - Open houses, presentation centre or facility for real estate purposes
- Churches, mosques, synagogues, temples or other places of worship
- Municipal facilities (e.g. libraries, community centres)

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- Indoor attractions, including art galleries, museums, zoos, paintball, bowling, indoor play spaces and other similar facilities
- Event spaces (banquet halls, community halls, arenas, auditoriums, and other similar facilities)
- Common areas of commercial buildings, hotels, motels and other short-term rentals, such as lobbies, elevators, meeting rooms or other common use facilities.
- Indoor entertainment facilities and venues, including concert venues, theatres, casinos, bingo halls and other similar facilities.
- Athletic facilities, including gyms, fitness centres, studios, and sports and recreational centres, and other similar facilities (non-medical masks do not need to be worn when engaging in physical activity, but are required in common areas).
- 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

Some exemptions exist and can be found in the [SMDHU instructions](#) and in the Reopening Ontario Act and/or its Regulations, as amended.

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

- Post appropriate visible signage indicating that non-medical masks or face coverings are required inside the establishment. Public signage is available on our [website](#) to download and print.
- Where a person not wearing a non-medical mask or face covering enters the premise, a verbal reminder should be given to the customer to wear a non-medical mask or face covering. Note: the customer entering the premises may have an exemption and is unable to wear a non-medical mask or face covering. Instead of turning away the customer please remind the customer of the policy. All exemptions should be enacted and enforced in "good faith" and should be used as a means to educate people on the use of non-medical masks or face coverings. The business, organization or public transit service should continue to follow the physical distancing and hand hygiene protocols.

What added protections are required to protect employees?

- Training: Ensure that all employees are aware of the policy and are trained on your establishment's expectations.
- For any indoor areas of the premises, employees should wear a face covering that covers their mouth, nose and chin, and as best as possible, maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from every other client/customer and employee while indoors.
- 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).
- If an employee, in the course of providing a service indoors, is required to come within two metres of another person who is not wearing a face covering and there is no separation (by physical barrier) between the employee and the other person, the employee needs to wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

What is considered adequate personal protective equipment for COVID-19?

- 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](#).

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What are some examples of added protections needed to protect customers?

- For customers in the store seen removing their non-medical masks or face covering for extended periods of time, a verbal reminder should be given to the customer of the requirement to keep on their non-medical mask or face covering.
- There may be situations where someone may require an employee to remove their non-medical mask or face covering to speak to them (e.g. for a specific communication need like lip reading). We remind anyone removing their non-medical mask or face covering to follow safe handling procedures and to keep a distance of 2 metres (6 feet) away from others.

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

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

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

Yes, employees need to wear a non-medical 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 non-medical mask or face covering can customers or employees wear?

Face coverings will not stop you from getting COVID-19, but may help protect others. A face covering means a non-medical mask, or other face coverings such as cloth mask that covers the mouth, nose and chin ensuring a barrier that limits the spread of respiratory droplets when you cough, sneeze or talk.

Face shields are not acceptable forms of a face covering for the purposes of these instructions. For more information about non-medical masks and face coverings visit [Health Canada](#) website.

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

For individuals seeking to obtain a new non-medical mask, a homemade or purchased 3-ply non-medical mask with a disposable or reusable filter-type layer may offer greater filtration compared to a 2-ply Non-medical mask with no filter, and is currently recommended by the World Health Organization and the Public Health Agency of Canada. The fit is the most important factor ensuring the nose and mouth are completely covered.

Who is exempt from wearing a non-medical mask or face covering?

Some people may not be able to wear a non-medical mask or face covering. It is best to not be judgmental of individuals and to not make assumptions about those you see without them. For a full listing of individuals whom non-medical masks aren't required for please refer to [Ontario Regulation 263/20](#).

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.

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

No, it is not required that you provide free face coverings for your customers. A face covering can be made at home and therefore most people would have access to a face covering.

Does a person still need to stay 2 metres away from others if they are wearing a non-medical 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 60-90% alcohol-based hand sanitizer, 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 non-medical masks?

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

- receiving services (including eating or drinking where dine-in services are allowed) or
- while actively engaging in an athletic or fitness activity including water-based activities.

An employee may remove their non-medical 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 my business/organization need to enforce this policy if we offer courses for the public (e.g. first aid, ESL)?

Yes. If the courses are offered in person and indoors then wearing a non-medical mask or face covering is required as well as the provision of physical distancing for all attending.

Does this policy apply to staff providing lifesaving functions?

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

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 non-medical masks and face coverings indoors be enacted in "good faith" and be used as a means to educate people on non-medical mask or face covering use. Best effort standard means that businesses ensure customers are reminded that they should wear a non-medical mask and continue wearing a non-medical mask 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 non-medical masks or face coverings, consider providing and promoting alternate ways of providing your products/services for them.

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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). Businesses, organizations and public transit services shall ensure that any person in the indoor area of the premises of the business or organization, or in a vehicle that is operating as part of the business or organization, wears a non-medical mask or face covering in a manner that covers their mouth, nose and chin. non-medical masks or face coverings may only be removed for regulated reasons (including to consume food or drink, to engage in an athletic or fitness activity). Individuals, businesses or organizations who do not comply with the non-medical 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 non-medical mask or face covering when leading a religious service/ceremony?

Face coverings or non-medical 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.

REVISED - Is a non-medical mask or face covering required to be worn by a speaker during public speaking engagements?

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

Are singers and other performers required to have face coverings during rehearsals and performances?

Singers or performers (e.g. musicians, actors) do not need to wear a non-medical 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 two metres 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, face coverings or non-medical masks should be used.

When can I take my non-medical mask or face covering off at a restaurant and what should I do with it while it is off?

Wear a non-medical mask or face covering into the restaurant, while ordering and until your food comes to your table. Your non-medical mask or face covering can stay off while you are eating and drinking. Once your food arrives take off your non-medical mask or face covering without touching the outside of it and store it in a bag specifically for storing your face covering (don't put it directly into your purse) or place face down between paper towels or layers of a napkin. Please refer to the Public Health Guidance for [Food Premises](#) document for more details.

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REVISED - When do non-medical masks or face coverings need to be used at weddings?

In any location, physical distancing of at least 2 metres is still required for everyone in attendance unless they are from the same household. In addition to physical distancing requirements, non-medical mask or face covering requirements also apply to all people attending indoor ceremonies and receptions ([see events and gatherings COVID-19 guidance](#)).

If photos are being taken at the event the photographer must maintain physical distance of at least 2 metres from those being photographed and wear a face covering or non-medical mask if the photos are indoors, or 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 two metres from other persons, except where necessary for the taking of the photographs. Persons who provide hair or makeup services must wear appropriate personal protective equipment