Optimizing the Use of Masks Against COVID-19

Masking is one layer in a multi-layer strategy to maximize protection against COVID-19. Other layers include vaccination, staying home when sick, physical distancing, reducing close contacts, gathering outdoors or in well-ventilated indoor places, hand hygiene and regular cleaning.

### Slowing the spread
- COVID-19 variants of concern (e.g. Omicron) spread very easily.
- Masks are one layer in a multi-layer strategy that help protect you and those around you.
- Select a high quality mask that fits snugly to your face and is comfortable to wear.

### Qualities of a good mask
- Fits well. Completely covers your nose, mouth and chin. Fits snugly against the sides of your face with no gaps. A nose bridge wire can help to prevent air from leaking out of the top of the mask.
- Filters air well. When breathing, air moves through the mask and not around it.
- Can be worn comfortably and is easy to breathe through for long periods of time.
- A well fitted medical mask or a respirator (N95, KN95) may provide better protection for you and others but cloth masks are generally more comfortable to wear for longer periods.

### Wear a mask when:
- In crowded places, such as large retail stores or event venues.
- In closed indoor spaces with poor ventilation.
- In close contact with people, other than your household.
Respirator

- Includes N95 and KN95.
- Provides best fit and filtration when fitted properly.
- May be uncomfortable for prolonged use.
- Non-fit tested respirators can be used as a high quality mask in the community.
- Respirators with exhalation valves should not be used.

Medical mask

- Can provide good fit and filtration.
- Includes surgical and procedure masks.
- Can be adjusted to fit face.
- Meets established filtration standards.

Cloth mask

- May be less able to ensure good fit and filtration.
- May be more comfortable for prolonged use.
- Construction is variable but should be made of 3 layers of high quality material.

Resources


Learn about the virus

To learn more and access up-to-date information on COVID-19, visit the Ontario Ministry of Health’ website: [ontario.ca/coronavirus](https://www.ontario.ca/coronavirus).

The information in this document is current as of December 24, 2021

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