Presentations for Schools and Child Care Settings: **Mask-Use for Children and Youth**

Transcript: Presentation 3 of 6
This presentation reviews the use of masks for children and youth.
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Slide 3

Objectives

• To discuss the importance of non-medical masking for source control (keeping ones droplets to themselves) in the prevention of COVID-19
• To review how to properly put on and take off a non-medical mask

These are objectives for this presentation:

• To discuss the importance of non-medical masking for source control (keeping ones droplets to themselves) in the prevention of COVID-19

• To review how to properly put on and take off a non-medical mask
This slide addresses the reason to wear a non-medical mask.

Source control means protecting others from a source of COVID-19 infection. When people wear a non-medical mask they are protecting others from their possible infection. The mask helps capture their respiratory droplets.

In school, masking is part of the bundle of health and safety measures to reduce infection transmission.
As with all interventions, it is important to weigh the benefits and the potential negative consequences. As discussed, the potential benefit of masking is from source control, which may be important given children are often asymptomatic. However, children need to be able to wear the mask properly and consistently for the most appreciable benefit – so there are age and developmental feasibility considerations. There are also potential negative consequences from masking that are likely more pronounced in younger age groups and include concerns around speech and language development and altered social interactions.

Depending on the community cases, the balance will shift. At the present time and in light of new variants of concern, the importance of source control and implementing measures that may lead to less school interruptions is paramount. But, guidance may change as the case counts drop and the incremental benefit of masking on top of other health and safety measures lessens.

Close contact is a driver of transmission. The multi-layer approach to prevention of COVID is used; masking is one measure in a bundle of measures.
What does a well-fitting mask look like? These pictures show an example.

- The mask should fit over nose, mouth and chin, with no gaping;
- Avoid touching/fiddling with the mask.
- If the mask has a wire, smooth that over the nose to help keep the mask in place
- **Students/children should have access to multiple masks as they should be removed when soiled, damp, damaged or difficult to breathe through. Dampness is a particular problem when masks are worn outside in colder weather**
- Non-medical masks are recommended to not to be shared, even with laundering between uses
Here are a few examples of how NOT to wear a mask: around your neck, on your forehead, under your nose, only on your nose, on your chin, dangling from one ear and on your arm.

Neck warmers or gaiters, or similar, are not recommended as alternatives to masks outdoors as they are not considered as effective for source control.
Should a mask be 2 or 3 layers? A 3 layer non-medical mask/cloth that has a filter may theoretically provide greater filtration. Keep in mind that additional layers may make it difficult to breathe. It’s important that the mask fits well, as noted earlier.
Here we review how a mask should be put on:

- Before putting on a medical or non-medical mask, clean your hands
- Pick up the mask using the ear loops
- Expand the mask
- Place the mask on your face by securing the elastic loops/ tie strings
- Ensure there are no gaps between your face and the mask
- Adjust mask to cover your chin and pinch metal nose piece (if available) to give a secure fit
- Do not touch the front of the mask when it is on

Clean your hands if you accidentally touch the mask as the outside of the mask is considered to be dirty

Masks that are visibly soiled, damp, damaged, or difficult to breathe through are to be discarded if disposable or should not be used until laundered (if it is a reusable cloth mask).

Lanyards are not recommended as young children/students may find it difficult to attach and detach the ends of the lanyard to the straps of the mask. Lanyards may also pose an accidental strangulation or choking hazard. Depending on of the materials used to make them, lanyards may also be difficult to clean if these become soiled or contaminated. If a lanyard is used, it is recommended that consideration be given to ensuring it has a safety release mechanism.

Non-medical masks are to be laundered between uses with hot water and regular laundry detergent, followed by thorough drying.
On this slide we review how masks should be taken off:

- First, perform hand hygiene – wash your hand or use alcohol based hand rub.
- Then, remove the mask using the ear loops only.
- Non-medical face masks that are intended to be reused should be stored in a clean paper bag, envelope, container or something similar that does not retain moisture. The bags should be labelled with the student’s name and discarded after each use. Containers should be cleaned and disinfected daily after each use. Plastic bags (e.g., sandwich bag) are not generally recommended to use for mask storage due to possibility of trapping moisture.
- After your mask is removed, perform hand hygiene again.
- For re-applying the mask:
  - Perform hand-hygiene or use hand sanitizer.
  - Pick up the mask from the clean surface/storage container using the ear loops.
  - Adjust the mask to your face as indicated in the above steps.
  - Perform hand hygiene (hand washing or sanitizer) after you’re done.
There are situations where children/youth should not wear a mask. These are outlined on this slide.

Masks should not be worn by children who are:

- under the age of 2
- unable to tolerate a mask (e.g., due to a medical condition or inability to wear/remove the mask properly)
- unable to remove the mask without assistance

There can be exemptions to wearing face masks for some children/youth and these should be discussed on a case-by-case basis in accordance with provincial, local public health and school board requirements.
What if a Child/Youth Cannot Wear a Mask - Should They Use a Face Shield?

• Important to remember that masking is only one of several health and safety measures implemented in schools to protect other students and school staff.

• Face shields are not considered an effective form of source control when worn alone.

• Face shields are used for eye protection and are meant to be worn in conjunction with a face mask.

What to keep in mind if a child/youth is not able to wear a mask:

• Wearing a mask is part of the bundle of health and safety measures

• Face shields are not considered an effective form of source control when worn alone, meaning that they do not adequately protect others from the wearer.

• When worn alone face shields are also not considered to be an effective form of personal protective equipment, also referred to as PPE and will not provide appropriate respiratory protection for the wearer.

Per the Ministry of Health Guide to Reopening Schools document, schools and school boards are expected to put reasonable exceptions in place to the requirement to wear masks, and students/children or staff members who have sensory or breathing difficulties may be exempted by the school principal, guided by school board policies. Local public health units may also be consulted for guidance.
For More Information ...

Public Health Ontario resources:

- COVID-19 Preparedness and Prevention in Elementary and Secondary (K-12) Schools: Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) Overview
- How To Wash Your Hands
- Putting On/Taking Off PPE
- When and How to Wear a Mask
- Infection Prevention and Control Fundamentals
- Infection Prevention and Control Tips for Children Attending School
- COVID-19 Preparedness and Prevention in Elementary and Secondary (K-12) Schools Checklist
- COVID-19 Preparedness and Prevention in Elementary and Secondary (K-12) Schools - Checklist Orientation (webinar)
- Public Health Ontario – Schools and COVID-19 webpage

If you would like more information, please see the list of resources here.
How did we do?
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Survey

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If you have questions, please email communications@oahpp.ca. Thank you!