



Renfrew County and District Health Unit  
*"Optimal Health for All in Renfrew County and District"*

## For Immediate Release

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(Pembroke, Ontario, September 9, 2020)

### **RCDHU COVID-19 Directive for Masks/Face Coverings - Doctor's Note NOT Required**

With schools reopened and more people returning to onsite work, questions are being posed about Renfrew County and District Health Unit's (RCDHU) COVID-19 Directive for Masks/Face Coverings in Renfrew County and District.

As you know, masking is mandatory in enclosed public places. This includes private places where individuals not in the same bubble come together, for instance in lobbies and hallways, on elevators and in laundry rooms of apartment buildings, condominiums or multi-unit residential buildings.

There has been excellent cooperation thus far, and RCDHU thanks the public for their support. Proper public health measures are what will keep the virus at bay. "As we move inside more and more, masks/face coverings will prove increasingly important" says Dr. Robert Cushman, Acting Medical Officer of Health, RCDHU.

Questions have been raised about individuals not wearing masks/face coverings, including those who meet exemption criteria. To date, RCDHU's COVID-19 Directive for Masks/Face Coverings has been to encourage mask/face covering use and **not** to single out individuals who do not comply.

**Many of these people have medical reasons for not wearing a mask/face covering, and we must take them at their word. Physicians are too busy, in emergency rooms and in clinics, to be called on to provide exemption letters. To this end, employers should not ask their staff to produce a doctor's note exempting them from masking.**

Dr. Cushman states that "Ironically most of these individuals, due to their prior conditions, would even benefit more from wearing a mask or face covering, and they should experiment little by little to see if they can adjust." Dr. Cushman continues, "We are seeing the same experience with children in the early years of schooling and of course, wearing a mask or face covering sometimes is better than nothing. It all helps reduce the risk of COVID-19."

"No doubt there will be some who will wrongly take advantage of this option, but the numbers should be few and hopefully over time these people will appreciate how important individual responsible actions are for the safety of the community," states Dr. Cushman.

In summary, “masking will become more and more important as we move towards the “new normal” and as winter approaches. Secondly, we must rely on individual decisions to mask or not to mask, and not require exemption letters for employers from busy physicians. And finally, we hope that over time more and more people will learn to wear a mask/face covering. It will improve personal protection for those with medical conditions, and it is the responsible thing to do to protect one and all,” ends Dr. Cushman.

Visit the [RCDHU website](#) for mask/face covering information and directions, guidance documents, fact sheets, Frequently Asked Questions, etc., (available both online and as hard copy). Residents can also call RCDHU at 613-735-8654 or 1-800-267-1097 (extension 555 for business re-opening).

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