



Renfrew County and District Health Unit

COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions Re: Directive for Masks/Face Coverings

Background

Each public health unit will be invoking a directive under the province's [Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act](#) that requires individuals to wear a mask/face covering in certain enclosed public spaces. Under the directive, the person responsible for a business or organization that is open shall operate the business or organization in compliance with the advice, recommendations and instructions of public health officials, including any advice, recommendations or instructions on physical distancing, cleaning or disinfecting.

In Renfrew County and District, this directive requires that masks/face coverings be worn in enclosed public spaces effective July 14, 2020. RCDHU's first step for implementation of this directive is a gradual education approach to be further assessed going forward. This directive is to be primarily used to educate people on mask/face covering use in premises because 2-metre physical distancing cannot always be maintained.

When does this directive go into effect?

In Renfrew County and District, the directive is effective as of July 14, 2020.

Why make masks/face coverings mandatory now?

As more businesses and public spaces open and people increase their contacts, the risk of a rapid rise in infections and outbreaks is ever-present.

Increasing scientific evidence supports wearing a mask/face covering when in enclosed public spaces as an important measure in reducing COVID-19 transmission.

Mask/face covering are recommended because they:

- keep our respiratory droplets to ourselves and help to prevent the spread of the virus to others;
- provide a non-invasive, inexpensive way to reduce the spread of COVID-19; and
- act as a visual reminder to others to remain vigilant and stay physically distant from others.

NOTE: Masks/face coverings should not replace physical distancing.



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Are masks/face coverings mandatory in Ontario?

While the province of Ontario has not made masks/face coverings mandatory, some municipalities now have provisions in place (or soon to be) for mandatory masks/face coverings. If you're travelling within the province, please be sure to:

- bring a mask/face covering with you,
- check the area you are travelling to for mandatory masks/face coverings orders or by-laws.

What is considered a mask/face covering according to this directive?

"Mask" means: a cloth (non-medical) mask, medical mask or other face coverings, (e.g., bandana, a scarf or cloth), for filtering respiratory droplets that securely covers the nose, mouth, and chin and is in contact with the surrounding face without gapping.

What happens if I do not wear a mask/face covering?

People in an enclosed public space who remove their mask/face covering for extended periods of time, will receive a verbal reminder to wear a mask/face covering under these instructions.

How is this directive being enforced?

Employees and operators will provide a verbal reminder to any customer entering the premises without a mask/face covering that the customer should be wearing a mask/face covering as a result of this directive.

Implementation of the policy will be enacted and enforced in 'good faith' and will be primarily used as a means to educate people on mask/face covering use in public spaces.

Can businesses require proof of exemption, or turn people away?

No person shall be required to provide proof of any of the exemptions or be turned away. **No medical documentation is required for a medical exemption from wearing a mask/face covering.**

Are both business staff and customers subject to fines?

Implementation of the policy will be enacted and enforced in 'good faith' and will be primarily used as a means to foster education on mask/face covering use in public spaces. RCDHU will continue to assess the enforcement as the directive moves forward.



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Can a face shield be used as a substitute or a replacement for a mask/face covering?

A face shield is not a substitute for wearing a mask/face covering as it does not filter respiratory droplets. A face shield may provide additional protection for the wearer against droplets expelled from another person, however these droplets may still be inhaled around the shield. Respiratory droplets expelled by the wearer may escape around the sides of the face shield, which therefore provides less protection to others. If you choose to wear a face shield, we recommend - if possible - to wear it in addition to a properly fitted mask/face covering.

Is a face shield a good alternative for someone who can't wear a mask/face covering?

A face shield would not be considered an equal substitute for a mask/face covering as it does not provide filtering capacity. However, the World Health Organization (WHO) supports the use of face shields as a "better than nothing" alternative to masks/face coverings if there is a shortage of masks/face coverings or for populations who are not able to properly wear masks/face coverings, such as individuals with a respiratory condition that prevents them from wearing a mask/face covering. The WHO makes note that face shields are inferior to masks/face coverings at preventing the spread of an infection through droplets and at a minimum should extend below the chin and cover the sides of the face.

Do I still need to stay 2-metres away from others if I am wearing a mask/face covering?

Yes. The person responsible for a business that is open to the public, or an organization responsible for a facility that is open to the public, shall ensure that the place of business or facility is operated to enable members of the public in the place of business or facility to, to the fullest extent possible, maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from other persons. **Wearing a mask/face covering is not an alternative to physical distancing.** Every effort should be made to keep a 2-metre distance even when wearing a mask/face covering.

Can I remove my mask/face covering if physical distancing is not a concern in the establishment or enclosed public space I am visiting?

Members of the public are permitted the temporary removal of a mask/face covering where necessary for the purpose of:

- receiving services (including eating or drinking when dine-in services are allowed) or



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

Who should not wear masks/face coverings?

Masks/face coverings should not be placed on:

- Children under the age of two years old or children under the age of five years either chronologically or developmentally who refuse to wear a mask/face covering and cannot be persuaded to do so by their caregiver.
- Individuals with medical conditions rendering them unable to safely wear a mask/face covering, including breathing difficulties or cognitive difficulties.
- Anyone who is unable to remove the mask/face covering without help
- Anyone who is unconscious or incapacitated
- There may be situations where someone who is deaf or hard of hearing that may require an employee to remove their face covering to speak to the customer. We remind anyone removing their face covering to follow safe handling procedures and to keep a distance of 2-metres (6 feet) away from others.
- [Ontario Face Coverings and Face Masks Page](#)

Where can I get a mask/face covering?

DISCLAIMER: *The following vendors were identified to us via social media and other Renfrew County and District residents. Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU) does not endorse any particular vendor of cloth masks, nor can we ensure that any vendor is able to maintain stock of these products. We are not liable if there are any issues related to the vendor or the purchased product. The vendors below are listed as a convenience with the intent of promoting the wearing of cloth masks in settings where physical distancing is not possible. If you are aware of other Renfrew County and District-based or Canada-based vendors producing cloth masks that are not currently listed below, please let us know at: media@rcdhu.com.*

Vendors can be found at <https://www.rcdhu.com/novel-coronavirus-covid-19-2/>

Health Canada: [Sew or no-sew instructions for home made mask/face covering](#)