

WHEN AND HOW TO WEAR A MASK

Wearing a mask can help to prevent the spread of some respiratory illnesses, but it can also become a source of infection if not worn or discarded properly. When you wear a mask, be sure to **clean your hands before putting the mask on**, and after removing and properly discarding it. Wash hands and frequently with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer

Wear a mask if:

- You have symptoms of COVID-19 (i.e., a fever, new or worsening cough, shortness of breath, a general feeling of unease, or being 'under the weather', muscle aches, fatigue, sore throat and runny nose, headache, diarrhea, vomiting or loss of smell) and are around other people.
- You are caring for someone who has COVID-19.
- Unless you have symptoms of COVID-19, there is no clear evidence that wearing a mask will protect you from the virus, however wearing a mask may help protect others around you if you are sick.



How to wear a mask:

- Before putting on your mask, wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Secure the elastic loops of the mask around your ears. If your mask has strings, tie them securely behind your head.
- Cover your mouth and nose with the mask and make sure there are no gaps between your face and the mask.
- **Do not touch the front of the mask while you wear it.** Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if you accidentally touch your mask.

How to throw away your mask:

- Do not touch the front of your mask to remove it.
- Remove the elastic loops of the mask from around your ears or untie the strings from behind your head.
- Hold only the loops or strings and place the mask in a garbage bin with a lid.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 15 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer after you have discarded your mask.

More information about masks:

- When a mask becomes damp or humid, replace it with a new mask.
- Do not reuse a single-use mask. Discard your mask when you have finished using it.

For information on use of homemade masks please see

[Health Canada: Considerations in the use of Homemade Masks to Protect against COVID-19](#)

This document was adapted with the permission of Public Health Ontario. Public Health Ontario assumes no responsibility for the content of any publication resulting from translation/changes/adaptation of PHO documents by third parties. [Public Health Resources, Public Health Ontario](#)