

Wearing a Face Mask or Covering in Indoor Public Spaces

Frequently Asked Questions



What you need to know

Members of the public who are able to wear a face mask or covering must do so in indoor public spaces in York Region. Owners and operators of these indoor public spaces are required to have a face mask or covering policy in place to stop individuals from entering the establishment if they are not wearing a face mask or covering. Mask signage must be posted in establishments as well.

Under what authority are these instructions being issued?

Effective October 2, 2020, the provincial government implemented new restrictions to help prevent and stop the spread of COVID-19. This includes mandating the use of face coverings in all public indoor settings across the province, including businesses, facilities and workplaces, with limited exemptions including corrections and developmental services.

These new restrictions were adopted through the amended order O. Reg 364/20 (Rules for Areas in Stage 3 under the Reopening Ontario [A Flexible Response to COVID-19] Act, 2020)

When are these instructions in effect? How long must people comply with these instructions?

The provincial government implemented new restrictions including mandating the use of face coverings in all public indoor settings across the province on October 2, 2020. All Ontarians must comply until further notice.

What is Public Health doing to make this happen?

York Region Public Health has provided instructions to all businesses and organizations to ensure the use of face masks or coverings while indoors.

Why are these instructions being issued?

These new instructions are being issued to help prevent and stop the spread of COVID-19 across the entire province.

These instructions reinforce the requirements that all persons responsible for a business or organization permitted to open shall ensure the business or organization operates in accordance with all applicable laws, including the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and the regulations under it.

For more information, visit
york.ca/covid19 or york.ca/mandatorymasks

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Enforcement and fines

Can I be fined if I don't wear a mask?

York Region and York Region Public Health will remain focused on educating the public on the proper use of face masks or coverings rather than on enforcement.

Will I be refused entry if I don't have a face covering on?

Wearing a face mask or covering is a simple and easy way to protect yourself and others. Although a business or organization has the right to deny entry to its premises, the policy regarding the use of face masks or coverings in indoor public spaces should be used as a means to educate the public about face mask and covering use. As such, York Region Public Health has instructed businesses to verbally remind customers and patrons to wear a face mask or covering and not to refuse entry.

Can businesses require proof of exemption or turn people away?

No, you will not be required to provide proof of exemption.

Public spaces

What is a public space? Which ones are included in the instructions?

- Any indoor space used as a place of business to sell or offer goods or services including malls or similar areas containing multiple places of business
- Churches, mosques, synagogues, temples or other places of worship
- Community centres including indoor recreational facilities
- Libraries, art galleries, museums, aquariums, zoos and other similar facilities
- Community service agencies providing services to the public
- Banquet halls, convention centres, arenas, stadiums and other event spaces
- Premises utilized as an open house, presentation centre or other facility for real estate purposes
- Common areas of hotels, motels and other short-term rentals such as lobbies, elevators, meeting rooms or other common use facilities
- Common areas of condominiums, apartments and multi-unit residential buildings, such as lobbies, elevators, meeting rooms or other common use facilities
- Concert venues, theatres, cinemas, casinos and other entertainment facilities

What public spaces are NOT included in the instructions?

The instruction does not apply to the following premises even if they would fall under the definition of an establishment:

- [York Region Transit](#) (YRT has its own [bylaw](#) requiring individuals wear a face covering while on transit vehicles or property)
- Schools
- Post-secondary institutions
- Child care facilities
- Private transportation
- Hospitals, independent health facilities
- Offices of regulated health professionals
- An area that is not enclosed or indoors (e.g. restaurant patio)

Do employees of the business, organization or public transit service need to wear a face covering?

Yes, employees need to wear a face covering when working in the indoor public space unless the employee is in an area of the premises that is not designated for public access.



Exemptions

Who is exempt from wearing a face mask or covering in a public space?

Those exempt from wearing a face mask or covering in indoor public spaces are:

- Children under two years of age
- Individuals with medical conditions rendering them unable to safely wear a mask including breathing difficulties or cognitive difficulties or difficulties in hearing or processing information
- Anyone who has trouble breathing
- Anyone who is unable to remove the mask without help
- Anyone who is unconscious or incapacitated
- Anyone wearing a face covering that would inhibit the ability to breathe in any way such as, but not limited to, during moderate to intense physical activity (such as running) or activity that would preclude its use (such as swimming)
- Anyone who requires accommodation under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*

About face masks and coverings

What kind of face covering can I wear?

A face mask or covering including a bandana, scarf, disposable mask or cloth mask that has been purchased or made that covers the mouth, nose and chin ensuring a barrier that limits the spread of respiratory droplets when you cough, sneeze or talk.

Can I wear a face shield instead of a face covering?

Face shields do not replace face coverings or masks. Your nose, mouth and chin must be covered. Face shields protect the wearer from respiratory droplets but do not protect those around them and must be worn with a mask.

Does a person still need to stay 2 metres away from others if they are wearing a face mask or covering?

Yes. All public health measures must still be maintained and promoted including washing your hands often with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand sanitizer, sneezing and coughing into your sleeve, staying home if you are ill and practicing physical distancing. These actions will reduce exposure to other people — this means staying at least 2 metres away from anyone outside your household.

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

You are permitted to temporarily remove your face mask or covering where necessary for the purpose of:

- Receiving services that would require the temporary removal (e.g., dental appointment)
- Consuming food or drink
- For any emergency or medical purpose
- While actively engaging in an athletic or fitness activity including water-based activities

