

Guidelines/Protocols for Face Coverings and Masks During COVID-19 Pandemic

Scope

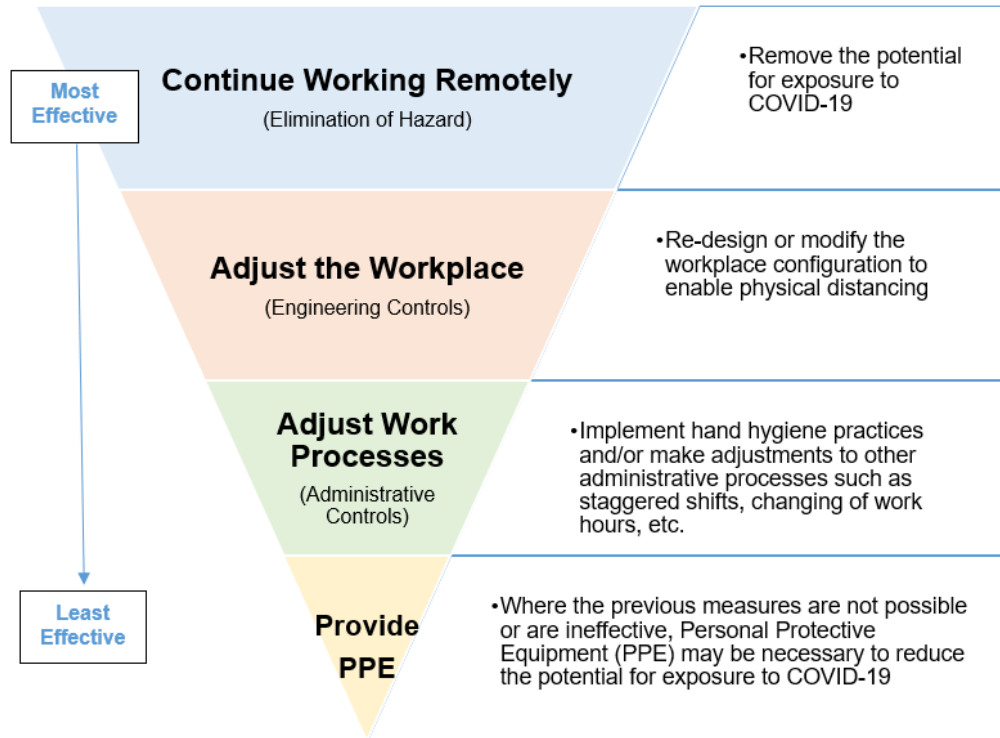
The guidelines outlined in this document will assist in the development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) related to **Face Coverings and Masks** and will help to ensure the appropriate COVID-19 health and safety considerations for the protection of all members of the McMaster community.

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Hierarchy of Hazard Control

Hazard mitigation should always focus on implementing control measures to eliminate or reduce risk. For this purpose, the hierarchy of controls must be considered. This hierarchy can be applied to any hazard in the workplace including COVID-19. A brief overview of this concept is highlighted below.



Common/Public Spaces

To further help limit the spread of COVID-19, McMaster University is implementing a measure that calls for non-medical masks or face coverings to be worn inside buildings that are normally publicly accessible.

Individuals who are in an indoor space that is normally publicly accessible (common areas) will be required to wear non-medical masks or face coverings when physical distancing is not possible with the exception of the McMaster University Medical Centre, where individuals must wear a minimum level 1 surgical mask in all indoor public spaces. This includes entrances/lobbies, hallways, elevators and other common use facilities such as food services, stores, etc.

Non-Public/Non-Common Work Areas, i.e. Offices, Laboratories

All efforts to achieve physical distancing within the work area must first be exhausted. If physical distancing can be achieved there are **no requirements for medical masks, non-medical masks and face coverings**.

In work areas where physical distancing **cannot** be achieved, individuals must wear medical (surgical) masks.

Non-Medical Masks/Face Coverings

It is important to know non-medical masks and face coverings when used for source control **are not** personal protective equipment (PPE). Non-medical masks or face coverings are required in indoor public spaces as source control where physical distancing may be difficult.

Face coverings/non-medical masks, like those made at home or purchased, are intended to limit the risk of the wearer exposing others to undetected illness or infection, including COVID-19. Recent findings suggest that the wearer also receives protection from a face covering/non-medical mask. These masks are not regulated and are very different from medical surgical masks or N95 mask. Wearing face coverings does not eliminate the need for physical distancing practices or hand hygiene.



Public Health recommends 3 layers for face coverings: 2 layers should be tightly woven material fabric, such as cotton or linen. The third (middle) layer should be a filter-type fabric, such as non-woven polypropylene fabric.

Surgical Masks

A surgical mask is a loose-fitting, disposable device that creates a physical barrier between the mouth and nose of the wearer and potential contaminants in the immediate environment. Surgical masks are regulated. If worn properly, a surgical mask is meant to help block large-particle droplets, splashes, sprays, or splatter that may contain germs (viruses and bacteria), keeping it from reaching your mouth and nose. Surgical masks are categorized accordingly, Level 1 - for low risk of fluid exposure, Level 2 - for moderate risk of fluid exposure, Level 3 - for high risk of fluid exposure.

Under certain circumstances due to the nature of the work or workplace where physical distancing 2m (6ft) is not possible, surgical masks will be provided by the supervisor in order to continue to work safely. A Level 1 surgical mask is sufficient for most workers performing non-medical work, i.e. office setting, custodial etc.



Masks for Healthcare Workers - N95 Masks



An N95 mask or N95 respirator is a particulate-filtering face piece respirator that meets the *U.S. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)* N95 classification of air filtration, meaning that it filters at least 95% of airborne particles. **N95 masks, must be kept for health care workers and others providing direct care to COVID-19 patients.**

All employees who are required to wear an N95 mask must first have specific training and respirator/mask fit testing successfully completed by Environmental and Occupational Health Support Services (EOHSS) or Faculty of Health Sciences Safety Office (FHSSO).

Hygiene Practices

If you do choose to wear a mask it is important that the following measures are taken:

Donning (On)

- Wash hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer if water is not readily available.
- Choose a mask with the correct size and fit.
- Place the mask carefully, ensuring it covers the mouth and nose, with the nosepiece on top.
- Place loops around each ear or tie securely to minimize any gaps between the face and the mask.
- Stretch mask to fit under chin and mold nosepiece to bridge of nose.
- Avoid touching the mask while wearing.

Doffing (Off)

- Before removing mask, wash hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer if water is not readily available.
- Remove the mask using the appropriate technique: do not touch the front of the mask but untie it/remove from behind, only touching the loops or ties of the mask.
- Place disposal masks immediately into garbage.
- After removal or whenever a used mask is inadvertently touched, clean hands using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer or soap and water.
- Wash/replace masks as soon as they become damp or soiled with a new clean, dry mask.

Resources

- [Public Health Ontario](#)
- [Government of Ontario](#)
- [Government of Canada](#)
- Public Health Ontario – [Mask Use for Non-Healthcare Workers](#)
- [Public Health Ontario – Donning \(On\)](#)
- [Public Health Ontario – Doffing \(Off\)](#)
- Government of Canada – [Face Coverings and Face Masks](#)