

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Mask or Face Covering

1. What is a face covering?

Face coverings are reusable or disposable, self-made or commercial cloth masks.

It is important to understand that face coverings are not classified as personal protective equipment (PPE). Unlike surgical or medical-procedure masks, face coverings do not meet certification standards. They are recommended for normal, day-to-day activities of most individuals as a public health measure but are not intended for use in health-care settings or by health-care professionals.

Note: York University refers to cloth masks as face coverings

2. What is a mask?

There are many different types of masks in the market depending on the hazard.

It is important to understand that non-medical masks are similar to face coverings as described above and are recommended as a public health measure to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Other masks (i.e., N95, procedural, surgical) are considered personal protective equipment and are recommended for specific tasks and occupations. Please refer to York's [Health and Safety Guidelines for Returning to Campus during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) for further information, or contact hsewb@yorku.ca.

3. What are the qualities of a good face covering?

- Consist of at least three layers as recommended by [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) and supported by [Public Health Agency of Canada](#).
- Cover nose, mouth and chin, and be easy to breathe through.
- Fit securely with ties or ear loops, without gaping or impairing vision.
- Be comfortable, to avoid the need for adjustments when wearing.
- Maintain their shape after washing and drying.
- Not contain non-breathable materials such as plastic.

For instructions on making a face covering using fabric, a t-shirt or a bandana, visit the [Government of Canada website](#).

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Individuals may purchase face coverings from two vending machines located on the Keele and Glendon Campuses. The two vending machines are branded My Lil'HealthBot and are located near the East Bear Pit in Centre Square on the Keele Campus and in La Station (formally The Bistro) at Glendon.

4. Does York University provide face coverings to those required to be on campus?

Yes, those staff, faculty and students required to be on campus during the 2020/21 Fall and Winter Term are provided with two face coverings, on a one-time basis. These face coverings can be obtained from the YU card Office located in 200 William Small Centre at the Keele Campus.

Note: The face coverings provided by York University as stated above for 2020/2021 Fall and Winter Terms are made up of three layers as recommended by [WHO](#) and supported by [Public Health Agency of Canada](#).

5. Is it recommended to wear a face covering or respirator with exhalation valves or exhaust valves?

Toronto Public Health does not recommend masks with an exhalation valve because, "they may filter dust particles in the air as the person inhales, but they may not filter virus particles or respiratory droplets. This means droplets from a person can be spread in a room, reducing the benefit of the mask. Respirators with exhaust valves are also not recommended. These are intended to make the respirator more comfortable for the person who is wearing it, but they can also allow respiratory droplets to spread in a room."

6. Is the use of clear plastic face coverings recommended?

Toronto Public Health states, "Clear plastic face masks that extend below the chin and wrap around the sides of the face may be considered when communicating with a person who is deaf or hard of hearing, to allow them to lip read. However, clear plastic face masks are not recommended for general use as they do not cover the nose, mouth and chin without gapping and cannot be properly cleaned and disinfected between uses."

7. How to wear, remove and care for a face covering?

Refer to York University's [Mask or Face Covering Information Sheet](#) for this information.

8. Why wear a face covering?

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Wearing a face covering is another way of covering your mouth, nose and chin to prevent respiratory droplets from contaminating others or landing on surfaces. Wearing a face covering can reduce the chance of others coming into contact with your respiratory droplets. In addition, Toronto Public Health states, “there is evidence that cloth masks can reduce the spread of respiratory droplets into the air and landing on surfaces. Jurisdictions that have legislated mandatory masks have seen a decrease in new COVID-19 cases.”

9. When to wear a mask or face covering?

Anyone entering an indoor space on any York University property, including all campuses, work sites and satellite offices, **must wear a mask or face covering that covers their mouth, nose and chin completely**. If you are on campus, please continue to practice physical distancing and try to stay two meters apart from others. Masks are now required in indoor public spaces regardless of current physical distancing guidelines.

Please wear your mask or face covering when entering a building and for the entire duration of your stay, unless an exemption applies. Indoor spaces at York include, but are not limited to, classrooms, administrative buildings, offices, meeting rooms and common areas in all residences, washrooms, hallways and elevators.

10. Can a mask or face covering be temporarily removed?

Face coverings may be temporarily removed while in an indoor area in the following circumstances:

- to receive services that require the removal of their mask or face covering,
- to engage in an athletic or fitness activity,
- to consume food or drink, or
- as may be necessary for the purposes of health and safety.

11. Who is exempt from wearing a non-medical mouth and nose covering at the University?

- children under two years of age;
- persons performing or rehearsing in a film or television production or in a concert, artistic event, theatrical performance or other performance as approved by the university;
- persons with an underlying medical condition which inhibits their ability to wear a mask or face covering;

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- persons who are unable to place or remove a mask or face covering without assistance;
- persons who are being accommodated under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, require accommodation in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code that precludes the wearing of a mask or face covering;
- York University departments and faculties may have specific practices which fall under provincial guidelines and/or operational requirements. For any questions, please contact hsewb@yorku.ca.

12. Do I need to wear a mask or face covering as a professor or instructor when I am teaching?

Yes, masks or face coverings should be worn in all indoor spaces shared spaces, unless an exemption applies.

13. If I am in a private office or other secured space alone, do I need to wear a mask or face covering?

As the scientific community continues to learn more and more about the mode of transmission of COVID 19, the University encourages a precautionary approach, which includes the wearing of masks or face coverings in all indoor areas. When individuals are alone in a secured space such as a private office, the mask or face covering can be temporarily removed when the door is closed.

14. As a student do I need to wear a mask or face covering in a classroom?

Yes, students are required to wear a mask or face covering in any indoor spaces including classroom, unless an exemption applies.

15. What if I cannot wear a face covering?

York University community members are not required to provide proof of any of the exemptions identified above. Community members are requested to exercise discretion and patience should they observe a fellow community member not wearing a face covering. In these cases, please reach out to your associate dean, supervisor or manager who can help address or direct your concerns. Student may reach out to OSCR@yorku.ca.

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

Toronto Public Health states the following:

A face shield is not an alternative to a face covering. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has stated that they “do not recommend use of face shields as a substitute for cloth face

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coverings. It is not known if face shields protect others from the spray of respiratory particles. The CDC does not recommend use of face shields for normal everyday activities or as a substitute for cloth face coverings.”

If you have a medical condition, disability or impairment that affects your ability to wear a face covering and need accommodation (e.g., a clear face shield, other accommodations, etc), please contact:

- Staff and faculty – Health, Safety and Employee Well Being at their confidential email address: ewb@yorku.ca and notify your manager or associate dean. **You are not required to disclose your specific medical condition to your supervisor or manager.**
- Students – Send an email to OSCR@yorku.ca. One of their personnel will connect with you.

17. What should I do if one of my colleagues or classmates is not wearing a mask or face covering?

York University community members are not required to provide proof of any of the exemptions identified above. Community members may require accommodation for medical condition or disability or fall under other exemptions which preclude them from wearing a mask or face covering. We ask that Community members exercise discretion and patience should they observe a fellow community member not wearing a mask or face covering. In these cases, please reach out to your associate dean, supervisor or manager who can help address or direct your concerns.

Associate Deans, Supervisors or Manager may always reach out to their area Health and Safety Officer and/or Health and Safety Advisors from Health, Safety and Well-Being unit as needed. Students may reach out to OSCR@yorku.ca.

18. How do I protect myself if my colleague, classmate or a patron is not wearing a mask or face covering?

Always practice the following measures:

- Practice 2-metre physical distancing.
- Wear your mask or face covering.
- In addition to wearing a mask or face covering, wear eye protection (i.e., safety glasses) if the person without mask or face covering is within 2-metre of you.
- Follow other public health measures such as washing your hands and practicing respiratory etiquette.

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- If you are still concerned, speak with your associate dean, supervisor or manager. Refer to [Health and Safety Guidelines for Returning to Campus during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) for additional information. Students may reach out to OSCR@yorku.ca.

Questions can be directed to Health, Safety and Employee Well-Being at hsewb@yorku.ca

References:

- COVID-19 Guidance on Masks and Face Covering Bylaw
<https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/9836-COVID-19-Guidance-on-face-mask-and-covering-bylaw.pdf>
- Health, Safety and Employee Well-Being
[Health and Safety Guidelines for Returning to Campus during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- O.Reg. 364/20: Rules for Areas in Stage 3
<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/200364>
- Use of Cloth Masks or Face Coverings
<https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/97f8-COVID-19-Guidance-for-Use-of-Face-Masks-and-Coverings-by-Public.pdf>