

## **Wearing masks or face coverings**

Medical masks, including surgical, medical procedure face masks and respirators (like N95 masks), must be kept for health care workers and others providing direct care to COVID-19 patients.

Wearing a non-medical mask or face covering (for example a [homemade cloth mask](#), a dust mask or a bandana) in the community has not been proven to protect the person wearing it. Strict hygiene and public health measures, including frequent hand washing and physical (social) distancing, will reduce your chance of being exposed to the virus.

Wearing a non-medical mask or face covering is an additional measure you can take to protect others around you, even if you have no symptoms. It can be useful for short periods of time, when physical distancing is not possible in public settings such as when grocery shopping or using public transit.

Wearing a non-medical mask or face covering covers your mouth and nose to help prevent your respiratory droplets from contaminating others or landing on surfaces. Just like our recommendation not to cough into your hands (instead, cover your cough with tissues or your sleeve), a mask can reduce the chance that others are coming into contact with your respiratory droplets.

If wearing a non-medical mask or face covering makes you feel safer and stops you from touching your nose and mouth, that is also good. But remember not to touch or rub your eyes.

### **Non-medical masks or face coverings have limitations and need to be used safely.**

Non-medical masks or face coverings should **not** be placed on:

- children under age 2
- anyone who has trouble breathing
- anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance

If you choose to use a non-medical mask or face covering:

- you must wash your hands immediately before putting it on and immediately after taking it off (in addition to practising good hand hygiene while wearing it)
- it should fit well (non-gaping)
- you should not share it with others

Face masks can become contaminated on the outside, or when touched by your hands. When wearing a mask or face covering, take the following precautions to protect yourself:

- avoid touching it while using it
- change a cloth mask as soon as it gets damp or soiled
  - put it directly into the washing machine or a bag that can be emptied into the washing machine and then disposed of
  - cloth masks and face coverings can be laundered with other items using a hot cycle, and then dried thoroughly
- non-medical masks or face coverings that cannot be washed should be discarded and replaced as soon as they get damp, soiled or crumpled
  - dispose of them properly in a lined garbage bin
  - do not discard them in shopping carts, on the ground, etc.

Masks alone will not prevent the spread of COVID-19. You must consistently and strictly adhere to [good hygiene](#) and [public health measures](#), including frequent [hand washing](#) and [physical \(social\) distancing](#).