

# **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) Masks and Face Coverings**

**YORK U**

### **Q. What is a face covering?**

Face coverings are reusable or disposable cloth masks that can either be purchased or self-made. They are not classified as personal protective equipment (PPE) and unlike surgical or medical-procedural masks, face coverings do not meet certification standards. They are recommended for normal, day-to-day activities as a public health measure, but they are not intended for use in health care settings or by health care professionals.

### **Q. What is a mask?**

There are many different types of masks on the market, depending on the hazard. Non-medical masks and face coverings are recommended to prevent the spread of COVID-19, as a public health measure.

Other masks (i.e., N95, procedural, surgical) are considered to be personal protective equipment and are/or used in health care settings to address medical needs. Please refer to York's [Health and Safety Guidelines for Returning to Campus during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) for more information contact: [hsewb@yorku.ca](mailto:hsewb@yorku.ca).

### **Q. When should I wear a mask or face covering?**

Anyone who is entering an indoor space on 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 stay apart from one another, giving others space. Masks are required in all indoor 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.

If you are an employee (e.g., staff, faculty, instructor) and you have concerns, please reach out to your Associate Dean, Supervisor or Manager to help address or direct your concerns. Students may reach out to: [sasreg@yorku.ca](mailto:sasreg@yorku.ca)

### **Q. Who is exempt from wearing a mask or face covering at the University?**

- children who are 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;
- 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, who 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](mailto:hsewb@yorku.ca).

If you are an employee (e.g., staff, faculty, instructor) and you have concerns, please reach out to your Associate Dean, Supervisor or Manager to help address or direct your concerns. Students may reach out to: [sasreg@yorku.ca](mailto:sasreg@yorku.ca)

**Q. Do I need to wear a mask or face covering as a professor or instructor while I am teaching?**

Yes, masks or face coverings must be worn in all indoor spaces and for the duration of stay; however, if teaching is impacted in a considerable way, the mask can be temporarily removed when a minimum of 2-metre physical distancing is maintained. **Note:** All attempts must be made to wear a mask or face covering.

**Q. If I am in a private office or other secured and enclosed space by myself, do I need to wear a mask or face covering?**

Masks or face coverings must be worn in all indoor spaces and for the duration of the stay, however when individuals are **alone** in a secured and enclosed space such as a private office, the mask or face covering can be temporarily removed while the door is closed.

**Q. Do I need to wear a mask or face covering in cubicle areas and shared workspaces?**

Masks or face coverings must be worn while indoors and for the duration of stay, however they can be temporarily removed when having a quick drink or to eat, provided that a minimum of 2-metre physical distance from others is maintained. Lunch can be eaten in designated eating areas as determined by area and signage should indicate the public health measures that are in place for eating spaces.

**Q. 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 classrooms, unless an exemption applies. Please see the FAQ, “Who is exempt from wearing a mask or face covering at the University.” Masks can temporarily be removed when having a quick drink or to eat. **\*Please take extra care to maintain physical distancing during such activities.** Be respectful of those with approved exemptions.

**Q. Can a mask or face covering be temporarily removed?**

Masks or face coverings may be temporarily removed while indoors under the following circumstances:

- to receive services that require the removal of a mask or face covering;
- to engage in an athletic or fitness activity;
- while consuming food or drink in **designated areas for meals as determined by the area** or as needed to take medication. **\*Please take extra care to maintain physical distancing during such activities.**
- as may be necessary for the purposes of health and safety.

**Q. What if I cannot wear a mask or face covering?**

York University community members are not required to provide proof of any of the exemptions identified in the FAQ, “Who is exempt from wearing a mask or face covering at the University?” Community members are asked to exercise discretion and patience should they observe a fellow community member not wearing a face covering.

Maintain 2-metre physical distancing as your way of promoting public health and helping anyone who may not be wearing a mask. If you are an employee (e.g., staff, faculty, instructor) and you have concerns, please reach out to your Associate Dean, Supervisor or Manager to help address or direct your concerns. Students may reach out to: [sasreg@yorku.ca](mailto:sasreg@yorku.ca).

**Q. Do I need to wear a mask or face covering when outdoors?**

Yes, wear a mask or face covering in outdoor settings when:

- it is not possible to maintain 2-meter physical distance from others.
- you are in outdoor spaces that are designated as learning spaces regardless of distancing requirements.

**Q. What are the qualities of a good mask or face covering?**

A good quality mask or face covering will:

- Consist of at least two layers of tightly-woven fabric (such as cotton or linen), and if possible a middle “filter” layer. A three-layer mask can provide added protection.
- Cover the nose, mouth, chin and be easy to breathe through.
- Fit securely with ties or ear loops and not gape or impair vision.
- Be comfortable and not require much adjustment.
- Maintain its shape after washing and drying.
- Not contain non-breathable materials such as plastic.

For instructions on how to make your own face covering with fabric (including a t-shirt or bandana), visit the [Government of Canada’s website](#).

**Q. Does York University provide face coverings to those coming to campus?**

No, all community members are required to bring their own good quality mask or face covering to campus. However, if you are on campus and you realize that you have forgotten, lost, soiled or damaged your mask, you can obtain 3-ply disposable medical/procedural masks in bundles of three from vending machines on both campuses.

An update on the location of these machines will be shared in this FAQ once available. Machines will be equipped with YU-card readers and the masks will be dispensed at a nominal cost to valid YU-card holders. Proceeds will go towards a disposable mask recycling program and information about how to add funds to your YU-card account is available on the [YU-card website](#).

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

Toronto Public Health does not recommend masks with exhalation valves because, “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.”

**Q. Is the use of clear plastic face coverings recommended?**

Toronto Public Health advises that, “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.”

**Q. How should I wear, remove and care for a mask or face covering?**

Please refer to York University’s [Mask or Face Covering Information Sheet](#) for guidance on this.

**Q. Why wear a mask or face covering?**

Wearing a mask or face covering helps to prevent your own respiratory droplets and aerosols from reaching others or from landing on surfaces. In the context of public health, masks reduce the chance of others coming into contact with any contaminant that is exhaled and made airborne. When you wear a mask or face covering, you also signal to others that you are doing your part to protect others from COVID-19.

**Q. Can I wear a face shield instead of a face covering?**

A face shield is not an alternative to a face covering, according to Toronto Public Health. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has also stated that they “do not recommend use of face shields as a substitute for cloth face coverings. It is not known if face shields protect others from the spray of respiratory particles. The CDC does not recommend the 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 you need accommodation, and you are:

- **Staff and faculty:** contact Health, Safety and Employee Well Being at their confidential email address: [ewb@yorku.ca](mailto:ewb@yorku.ca) and notify your manager or associate dean. **\*Please note, you are not required to disclose your specific medical condition to your supervisor or manager.**
- Students: send an email to [sasreg@yorku.ca](mailto:sasreg@yorku.ca) and someone will connect with you.

**Q. What should I do if one of my colleagues or classmates is not wearing their mask or face covering?**

York University community members are not required to provide proof that they are exempt from this requirement. It’s important to be aware that community members may require accommodation for medical conditions, disabilities or other exemptions that preclude them from wearing a mask or face covering.

We ask that community members exercise discretion and patience should they see a fellow community member not wearing a mask or face covering.

In this case, maintain 2-metre physical distancing and wear your mask or face covering as your way of promoting public health and helping anyone who is not wearing a mask. If you cannot maintain 2-metre physical distance in the classroom but you need to temporarily remove your mask, please go to an area outside of the classroom whereby you can maintain 2-metre physical distancing from others before temporarily taking your mask off.

Please also refer to the “[Community of Care Commitment: Resources and Pathways to Support Conflict Resolution](#)” for guidance and support on this topic and more. You can also reach out to your associate dean, supervisor or manager who can help address or direct your concerns. Associate deans, supervisors or managers may always reach out to their area’s Health and Safety Officer and/or Health and Safety Advisors from Health, Safety and Well-Being if they need support and students can reach out to: [OSCR@yorku.ca](mailto:OSCR@yorku.ca).

**Q. How do I protect myself if my colleague or classmate is not wearing a mask or face covering?**

Always follow the following health and safety measures:

- Maintain 2-metre physical distancing, where possible.
- If you cannot maintain 2-metre physical distance in the classroom but you need to temporarily remove your mask, please go to an area outside of the classroom whereby you can maintain 2-metre physical distancing from others before temporarily taking your mask off.
- Wear your mask or face covering.
- Follow other public health measures, such as washing your hands and practicing respiratory etiquette.
- If you are still concerned, speak with your associate dean, supervisor or manager. Please refer to the [Health and Safety Guidelines for Returning to Campus during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) for additional information and students may reach out to: [sasreg@yorku.ca](mailto:sasreg@yorku.ca).

All general questions can be directed to Health, Safety and Employee Well-Being at: [hsewb@yorku.ca](mailto:hsewb@yorku.ca)

**References:**

- [COVID-19 Guidance on Masks and Face Covering Bylaw](#)
- [Health and Safety Guidelines for Returning to Campus during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- [Use of Cloth Masks or Face Coverings](#)