

Health and safety conversation tips



Topic #1: General personal health information

What we can do

Remember and remind others that everyone has a right to keep the details of their personal health information private. Also consider if there are power differentials between yourself and other individual(s). Even if a relationship is not marked by an obvious power differential (e.g., peer-to-peer, student-to-student), consider that even voluntarily disclosing your own health information (e.g., vaccination status) may lead to an unspoken expectation someone should reciprocate where otherwise they may not choose to.

What we can't do

- Individuals may not request or demand personal medical information from another person including (but not limited to) inquiring about or asking for verification of their vaccination status.
- Individuals cannot deny another individual access to a teaching, learning or research space, based on assumptions about their personal health information, including their vaccination status.

Conversation starter

“We all share a responsibility to keep one another safe. While we’re on campus, we need to observe health and safety regulations or protocols, including wearing a mask in any and all indoor spaces.”

“I respect that your personal health information is private and confidential and that we cannot request or demand it from someone else.”



Topic #2: Masks

What we can do

We can remember and remind others that masks are required while indoors on-campus and when we engage in in-person activities. There may be cases where someone is exempt from this due to medical reasons.

What we can't do

- Outside of situations where Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is expected to be worn, for example as part of a program or functional unit's own requirements, no individual may demand proof of any of the exemptions for mask wearing.

Conversation starter

“I recognize that you may not be able to wear a mask because of an exemption. However, if that is not the case, I ask for your help in keeping everyone on campus safe. The University’s policy says that, while indoors, you are required to wear a mask.”

“If you need a mask, they can be acquired using your YU-card at vending machines on campus. There is a [map](#) showing where these vending machines can be found on the Better Together site.”

“I know wearing a mask may not be comfortable, but it’s an important way to protect us all.”



Topic #3: Awareness of current public health guidelines

What we can do

It is appropriate to reiterate current York University policy in classrooms, research, or other academic or administrative settings, so long as information is shared at a collective level.

However, there may be some situations in which it will be appropriate to have a private one-on-one conversation (e.g., between a manager and their staff member). Concerns at the individual level should be addressed following the guidance below.

What we can’t do

- We cannot target individuals and/or groups in the name of public health surveillance.
- In particular, we must be sensitive to the ways in which unconscious bias, discrimination, and racism have interwoven through the pandemic and disproportionately impacted Indigenous, racialized, and low-income groups and communities.

Conversational starter

“So much has changed over the course of the pandemic. But the one thing that has held steady is that things constantly change. I know it’s frustrating, but we do need to follow the health and safety regulations and protocols of the University.”

“This may be different from what you were expecting, but we are all required to follow the University’s health and safety regulations or protocols.”



Topic #4: Debating the validity of health and safety measures

What we can do

We must see the return to York’s campuses as a transitional process (not a singular event) that requires ongoing patience. It is appropriate to make clear that the University has specific health and safety regulations and protocols, and that it has set expectations that all coming to campus must observe health and safety measures.

What we can't do

- Campus security services provide 24/7 support to all members of the University community. However, while it may be tempting, we should not immediately call on campus security services when or where conflict can be resolved through dialogue and communication.

Conversation starter

“I see that you are frustrated and respect your concerns. However, these are not my rules, rather the University has put them in place for community members who plan to come to campus during the pandemic. These rules are also supported by Toronto Public Health and the Ministry of Colleges and Universities.”

“For the time being, can you please [state desired action]? Afterwards we can either calmly discuss this further or you can consider following up with [state first point of contact.]”

**Topic #5: Creating individual health and safety rules**

What we can do

Be aware of and observe the University's health and safety regulations and protocols at all times while on campus and while engaging in in-person activities. You can remind others that the Better Together website is a one-stop resource on what is and is not allowed on York's campuses during the pandemic.

What we can't do

- No university community member may create their own guidelines around health and safety that conflict with York University policy or procedures.

Conversation starter

“York has defined health and safety measures that must be observed by all coming to campus and who participate in in-person activities. Information about COVID-19 health and safety measures can be found on the Better Together website and it's a very valuable resource for understanding what is and is not allowed on campuses.”