

York University's Mask or Face Covering Protocol

All Persons entering an indoor space on York University property are required to wear a mask or face covering in a manner that covers their mouth, nose and chin when entering and for the duration of their stay, unless an exemption applies.

There are different types of masks available on the market for public use. In November 2021, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) [noted](#) that: "Different types of masks are available for public use. Non-medical masks, medical masks and respirators can all be used in the community."

What type of mask to choose:

The effectiveness of non-medical masks in preventing the spread of COVID-19 can vary based on many factors. It depends on material, construction, fit and proper use. Some non-medical masks can help prevent the spread of COVID-19 similarly to medical masks if they:

- Fit well
- Have multiple layers, including at least 2 layers of breathable tightly woven fabric, such as cotton **and**
- An effective middle filter layer

Few non-medical masks provide information about their filtration effectiveness.

As noted by the PHAC, "In general, while non-medical masks can help prevent the spread of COVID-19, medical masks and respirators provide better protection. No matter which type of mask you choose, proper fit is a key factor in its effectiveness."

Further the PHAC states that a respirator worn in the community doesn't need to have been formally fit tested as is required in some occupational settings. Face coverings are reusable or disposable cloth masks that can either be purchased or self-made. Masks and face coverings are not classified as personal protective equipment (PPE) when used as a general public health measure.

Where does this protocol apply?

This Protocol applies to all those who are present on University property at any time and for any purposes including, but not limited to employees, students, contractors, volunteers, and visitors.

Indoor university spaces include: lobbies, elevators, hallways and corridors, stairwells, washrooms, service desks, cafeterias and lunchrooms, common areas in residences, study lounges, meeting rooms, classrooms, research and teaching labs, shared or open-space offices, and other locations used in common, particularly where practicing physical distancing may be difficult or unpredictable.

**And outdoors when waiting in line or congregating and when physical distancing of 2 metres cannot be maintained.*

Exemptions

As per [O. Reg. 364/20](#), there are exemptions from the requirement to wear a mask or face covering. Some of the exemptions relevant to the University community include:

- Children who are under two years of age;
- Persons with an underlying medical condition that 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, or persons who require accommodation in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code that preclude the wearing of a mask or face covering; and
- York University departments and faculties may have specific practices that fall under provincial guidelines and/or operational requirements. For any questions, please contact: hsewb@yorku.ca.

York University community members are not required to provide proof of any of the exemptions identified above. We ask that community members exercise discretion and patience should they observe a fellow community member not wearing a mask or face covering. If concerned, individuals may consult the following:

- **Staff/faculty:** should inform their manager and Employee Well-Being (EWB) at: ewb@yorku.ca
- **Students:** both at the Undergraduate and Graduate level should inform the Office of Student Community Relations (OSCR) at: oscr@yorku.ca.

If a student believes that they have a medical reason to be exempt from York's mandatory mask/face covering protocol, they must engage [Student Accessibility Services \(SAS\)](#) to review and confirm the request for a formal exemption so that appropriate physical distance and other necessary health and safety precautions can be implemented.

Masks or face coverings may be temporarily removed while in an indoor area, in the following circumstances and only when public health guidance permits:

- To receive services that require the removal of a mask or face covering;
- While actively 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;**
- 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 (such as to eat lunch). If the door is open, or someone enters the room, the mask or face covering must be donned.
- Eating and drinking in instructional spaces are not permitted unless under exceptional circumstances, for example: to take a sip of water or to ingest a small amount of food for urgent health purposes (ie. Low blood sugar or to take medication)
- To engage in an athletic or fitness activity;
- when 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;

- As may be necessary for the purposes of health and safety.

Wearing a mask or face covering is used for source control meaning that, when we wear a well-fitted mask, we protect ourselves and others. If there are individuals who are not wearing masks or face coverings due to exemptions or other reasons, additional control measures need to be implemented (e.g., physical distancing).

Signs have been posted at entrances to all buildings reminding community members of the need to wear masks or face coverings while indoors. For more information, please refer to the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) on the [Better Together](#) website.

Mask or face coverings are not a substitute for personal protective equipment (PPE). Questions about masks, face coverings, or PPE can be directed to the reporting manager, supervisor or associate dean, Student Accessibility Services at sasreg@yorku.ca, OSCR at oscr@yorku.ca or Health, Safety and Employee Well-Being (HSEWB) at hsewb@yorku.ca.

This Protocol should not be interpreted in a way that conflicts with or replaces existing requirements or obligations under [O. Reg. 364/20](#), the [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) or other applicable statutes and regulations.

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](#)
- COVID-19 mask use: Advice for Community Settings