

FAQ's- Wearing a Face Covering in All Indoor Public Spaces

What are we being asked to do?

As of July 13, 2020 you will be required to wear a face covering in all indoor public spaces (businesses, organizations and public transit systems) in Simcoe County and the District of Muskoka.

What kind of face covering can I wear?

A face covering means a non-medical mask, or other face coverings such as a bandana, scarf, or cloth mask that has been purchased or made, that covers the mouth, nose and chin ensuring a barrier that limits the spread of respiratory droplets when you cough, sneeze or talk.

What is the health unit doing to make this happen?

The health unit has provided instructions to all businesses, organizations and public transit services to ensure the use of face coverings while indoors. These instructions are being issued by the Medical Officer of Health at Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) under the authority of the provincial Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act (EMCPA) and will continue while the provincial Emergency Orders remain in force.

Why are these instructions being issued now?

While cases of COVID-19 are currently decreasing across Simcoe Muskoka region, the risk of ongoing spread of COVID-19 remains as the re-opening process continues across the region.

The use of non-medical masks or face coverings in all indoor public spaces is an additional public health measure (along with physical distancing, hand hygiene, cough etiquette, and staying home when sick) that may prevent the spread of COVID-19 within our local communities.

What type of business or organizations are included?

All businesses, organizations and public transit are included that have indoor spaces that are openly accessible to members of the public and are used for the purposes of offering goods or services for sale to members of the public and currently include, but not limited to, the following:

- Retail stores
- Convenience stores
- Malls and shopping plazas
- Food premises
- Personal service settings
- Grocery stores and bakeries
- Churches or faith settings
- Farmers' markets
- Areas of mechanics' shops and garages, and repair shops which are open to the public

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- Libraries
- Community centres
- Private transportation (e.g. bus, taxi, or limo)
- Public transportation (e.g. bus or train)
- Business offices open to the public
- Professional offices where clients receive purchased services (e.g. lawyer's or accountant's offices) that are not open to members of the public

What indoor public spaces are NOT included?

- Schools, licensed child care centers and indoor/outdoor day camps
- Indoor areas of a building accessible to only employees
- Areas that are outside, whether or not the areas are covered (e.g. restaurant patios)

Will I be refused entry if I don't have a face covering on?

Wearing a face covering is a simple and easy way to protect yourself and others around you. Although a business, organization or public transit service has the right to deny entry to their premise, the policy regarding the use of face coverings indoors should be used as a means to educate people on face covering use, as such we have instructed businesses to verbally remind customers to wear a face covering and to not refuse entry.

What if I can't wear a face covering?

The following individuals don't have to wear a face covering in indoor public spaces:

- Children under two years of age, or children under the age of five years either chronologically or developmentally who refuse to wear a mask and cannot be persuaded to do so by their caregiver.
- Individuals with medical conditions rendering them unable to safely wear a mask, including breathing difficulties or cognitive difficulties or difficulties in hearing or processing information.
- Anyone who has trouble breathing.
- Anyone who is unable to remove the mask without help.
- Anyone who is unconscious or incapacitated.
- Anyone wearing a face covering that would inhibit the ability to breathe in any way such as, but not limited to, during moderate to intense physical activity (such as running) or activity that would preclude its use (such as swimming).
- For any religious reasons.

Can businesses require proof of exemption, or turn people away?

No, you will not be required to provide proof of exemption.

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

Face shields do not replace face coverings or masks. Your nose, mouth, and chin must be covered. Face shields protect the wearer from respiratory droplets but do not protect those around them, and must be worn with a mask.

Who is responsible for enforcing this requirement?

Under the EMCPA both the public health unit and municipal bylaw officers can enforce these requirements.

Can I be fined if I don't wear a mask?

SMDHU's focus is on raising public awareness and educating people on the use of non-medical masks or face coverings in premises where physical distancing may be difficult. However, individuals, businesses or organizations who do not comply with the requirements may be fined as per the EMCPA. It is important to know that while we will commence with an educational and supportive approach, as per the EMCPA, those who do not comply with the above noted requirements may be fined. Individuals may be liable for a fine of \$750 - \$1,000 up to a maximum of \$100,000, while corporations may be liable for a fine of up to \$10,000,000 for each day or part of each day on which the offence occurs or continues.

Do employees of the business, organization or public transit service need to wear a face covering?

Yes, employees need to wear a face covering when working in the public areas of the indoor public space unless the employee is within or behind a physical barrier (e.g. Plexiglas barrier) or is in an area of the premises that is not designated for public access.

Does a person still need to stay 2 metres away from others if they are wearing a face covering?

Yes. All public health measure must still be maintained and promoted including [washing your hands](#) often with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand sanitizer, sneezing and coughing into your sleeve, staying home if you are ill and practising physical distancing to reduce exposure to other people — this means staying at least 2 metres (6 feet) away from anyone outside your household or social circle.

Can I remove my face covering if physical distancing is not a concern in the establishment or enclosed public space?

You are allowed to temporarily remove your face covering where necessary for the purpose of:

- receiving services (including eating or drinking when dine-in services are allowed) or
- while actively engaging in an athletic or fitness activity including water-based activities.

Ensure you wash your hands using soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after removing your mask or face covering.

How do I properly wear a face covering?

- Wash your hands immediately before putting it on and immediately after taking it off (practise good hand hygiene while you are wearing the face covering).
- Make sure the face covering fits well around your nose and mouth.

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- Avoid moving the mask around or adjusting it often.
- Avoid touching the covering while using it.
- Do not share it with others.
- Face coverings should be changed when they get slightly wet or dirt
- [Video: how to wear your non-medical mask properly.](#)
- [Sew and no-sew instructions](#) for how to make a cloth mask.

How do you clean and dispose of a face covering?

When removing a face covering, you should:

- throw disposable face coverings into a lined garbage bin
- wash your hands
- do not leave any discarded face coverings in shopping carts or on the ground
- reusable face coverings must be cleaned frequently.

If your face covering is damp or soiled you should:

- put it directly into the washing machine or a bag that can be emptied into the washing machine
- wash with other items using a hot cycle with laundry detergent (no special soaps are needed), and dry thoroughly
- wash your hands after putting the face covering into the laundry
- all face coverings that cannot be cleaned should be thrown out and replaced as soon as they get damp, soiled or crumpled.

For more information or if you have questions about wearing face coverings or masks in any indoor public space, please call SMDHU Health Connection at 1-877-721-7520.

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