COVID-19 protective measures and personal protective equipment (PPE)

This document gives an overview of protective measures and personal protective equipment (PPE) for members of the University community, including non-medical masks, gloves and protective eyewear and face shields.

The health and safety of the campus community is our primary focus amid the global COVID-19 pandemic. Everyone must follow health and safety practices to keep University operations open and safe. We are all responsible for ensuring a healthy and safe workplace, so if you see an issue, speak up!

How to protect yourself

The best thing you can do to prevent the spread of COVID-19 is to wash your hands frequently with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds. If none is available, hand sanitizer with a minimum 60% alcohol base is a suitable alternative.

Where possible, you should (as applicable):

- stay at home
- maintain at least a two-metre physical distance from others
- avoid touching your face, mouth, nose or eyes

Masks

N95 respirators should be reserved for specific high-risk settings and are not recommended for low-risk daily activities. Therefore, in accordance with public health recommendations, the University does not provide N95 respirators for low-risk daily activities. Medical masks might be appropriate in certain settings that must be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Non-medical masks and homemade facial coverings have not been proven to protect those wearing them and are an added measure on top of physical distancing and handwashing. The use of non-medical masks can help reduce the spread of your own respiratory droplets (which are created by talking, breathing, shouting, singing, etc.), which can help reduce the spread of COVID-19. Even when wearing a non-medical mask or facial covering, refrain from touching your mask or face.

The filtration effectiveness of cloth masks is generally lower than that of medical masks and respirators. However, cloth masks can provide some protection if well designed and used correctly. Multilayer cloth masks designed to fit around the face and made of water-resistant fabric with a high number of threads and finer weave can provide reasonable protection.¹

Requirements

Where physical distancing cannot be maintained and in indoor common spaces, such as hallways, lobbies, stairways, washrooms and elevators, you must wear a non-medical mask or homemade facial

¹ Centers for Disease Control (CDC). “Effectiveness of Cloth Masks for Protection Against Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2.”
covering. Masks are not required in areas that are inaccessible to members of the public and where it is possible to maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from every other person.

**Recommendations**
Wear masks in outdoor environments where physical distancing is not possible. Additionally, indoor wearing of masks helps to minimize respiratory droplets.

**Appropriate use of non-medical masks and facial coverings**
Non-medical face masks and facial coverings should:
- allow for easy breathing
- fit securely to the head with ties or ear loops
- maintain their shape after washing and drying
- be changed as soon as possible if damp or dirty
- be comfortable and not require frequent adjustment
- be made of at least three layers of tightly woven material fabric (such as cotton or linen) with a filter media
- be large enough to cover the nose and mouth completely and comfortably without gapping
- be cleaned after each use
- when removed, be stored in a bag until cleaned (the bag can be reused if washed properly)

Non-medical masks or facial coverings should not:
- be shared with others
- impair vision or interfere with tasks
- be made of plastic or other non-breathable materials
- be secured with tape or other inappropriate materials
- be made exclusively of materials that easily fall apart, such as tissues
- be worn by anyone unable to remove them without assistance or anyone who has trouble breathing

**Limitations**
Homemade masks and facial coverings are not medical devices and not regulated like medical masks and respirators. They have a number of limitations:
- They have not been tested to recognized standards.
- The fabrics are not the same as those used in surgical masks or respirators.
- The edges are not designed to form a seal around the nose and mouth.
- They may not provide complete protection against virus-sized particles.
- They may not be effective in blocking virus particles that can be transmitted by coughing or sneezing.

**Provision**
The University will provide facial coverings to faculties and services for distribution. Materials can be requested by designated representatives of faculties and services.
How to don and doff

**Donning**

Ensure you wash your hands immediately before putting the mask on, immediately before adjusting it, immediately before taking it off and immediately after taking it off. Use soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to wash your hands.

- Make sure your mask completely and comfortably covers the nose and mouth without gapping and allows for easy breathing.
- Make sure your mask is secured to your head with ties or ear loops without the need to adjust frequently.
- If you wear glasses, you can still wear a mask. Wash your hands before adjusting your glasses.
- If your mask has pleats, ensure that the pleats on the outer side are facing down.
- If your mask has a metal strip over the nose, pinch it to ensure a closer fit over your nose.
- Replace the mask as soon as it becomes damp or dirty, or if it has shrunk after washing and drying.
- Do not share your mask with others, even within your own household.
- Masks are made and fit differently. Learn how to wear your mask.

**Doffing**

Wash your hands before and after removing your mask, or any time you wish to adjust your mask without removing it. Take off your mask when:

- You are safely able to (when physical distancing can be maintained) and the mask can be placed in a lined garbage bin (if it is not reusable), in a plastic bag for a short time while transporting it home or directly in the washing machine.
- It becomes damp or dirty and you can exchange it for a new one (if you are still in a situation where you need to wear a mask).

For more, see this [Ottawa Public Health mask-wearing infographic](#) and [Government of Canada mask-wearing video](#).

**Cleaning**

Cloth masks or face coverings should be changed and cleaned if they become damp or soiled. You can wash your cloth mask by:

- Putting it directly in the washing machine, using a hot cycle (or by hand if a washing machine is not available), using soap and warm or hot water.
- Allow to dry completely before wearing again.

Non-medical masks that cannot be washed should be disposed of properly in a lined garbage bin, and replaced as soon as they get damp, soiled or crumpled.

**Gloves**

Gloves are not a substitute for proper hand hygiene. Wearing gloves can make you feel more protected from the virus than you are. It increases the risk of transmission if you touch other things with your
gloves and then touch your face. Gloves must also be changed regularly and must follow proper donning and doffing procedures.

The best protection against COVID-19 for members of the University community is regular hand washing, for at least 20 seconds, with soap and warm water. Where hand washing facilities are not readily available, an alcohol-based sanitizer (minimum 60%) is a suitable alternative.

Gloves are an integral means of protection in medical and laboratory workspaces and continue to be provided for persons in those settings. Otherwise, the University does not provide gloves as part of its COVID-19 response. Where necessary, individual exceptions can be made.

Protective eyewear
Protective eyewear is required based on level of risk. Eye protection can provide a barrier to infectious materials. Close proximity contact (less than two metres) for a cumulative period of 15 minutes within a 24-hour period is considered contact.² Wearing protective eyewear reduces risk of transmission in close contact settings.

Protective equipment options include goggles and face shields, with goggles as the recommended equipment due to their ability to form a greater seal around the eyes. Appropriately fitted, indirectly-vented eyewear provides the most reliable and practical eye protection from respiratory droplets. Eyewear with a snug fit around the eyes or a face shield that covers the front and sides of the face provides the most reliable eye protection from respiratory droplets.

If you wear prescription glasses, use a face shield or goggles that fit snugly, with no gaps between the protective equipment and your face. Store them in a designated clean area in a manner that prevents contamination when you are not using them. Ensure good compatibility between your eye protection and your mask so that there is no interference with the proper positioning of the eye protection or with the fit or seal of the respirator or mask.

Gowns and lab coats
Gowns and lab coats are a traditional component of laboratory health and safety equipment. In terms of COVID-19, they are primarily intended for frontline health care workers and thus should not be used by the general University community outside of normal laboratory operations. Where necessary, individual exceptions can be made.

Gowns and lab coats continue to be provided for persons in medical and laboratory workspaces. Otherwise, the University does not provide gowns and lab coats as part of its COVID-19 response.

² Ontario Ministry of Health. “COVID-19 Variant of Concern: Case Contact and Outbreak Management Interim Guidance.”
Cleaning gowns and lab coats during COVID-19

We recognize the need for a more centralized laundry process for lab coats, and discussions are underway to best evaluate how this can be achieved. As part of normal hygiene practices, gowns and lab coats should be assigned to individuals and not shared among lab users.

Resources

This document was developed with information from Health Canada, Public Health Ontario and Ottawa Public Health.

- Health Canada – Non-medical masks and face coverings: About
- Health Canada – Importance of medical gowns
- Ottawa Public Health – Frequently Asked Questions
- Ottawa Public Health – Masks
- Public Health Ontario – Mask use for non-healthcare workers