

## COVID-19 Protective Measures and Community Protective Equipment (CPE)

This document serves to give an overview of protective measures and community protective equipment (CPE) for members of the University community, including non-medical masks, gloves and face shields.

The health and safety of the campus community is our most important focus amid the global COVID-19 pandemic. Everyone must place an increased focus on health and safety in order to keep University operations open and safe. We are all responsible for ensuring a healthy and safe workplace, so if you witness an issue, you are empowered to 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:

- stay at home;
- maintain at least a 2-metre physical distance from others;
- avoid touching your face, mouth, nose or eyes.

### Non-Medical Masks

Medical masks and N95 respirators should not be worn by general University community members. Medical masks and 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 will not provide N95 respirators to the general campus community for low-risk daily activities.**

Where physical distancing cannot be maintained and in **indoor common spaces on our campus, such as hallways, lobbies, stairways, washrooms, and elevators**, it is recommended to wear a non-medical mask or homemade facial covering. Non-medical masks and homemade facial coverings **have not been proven to protect the person wearing it and are not a substitute for physical distancing and handwashing**. Nevertheless, the use of non-medical masks and homemade facial coverings for short periods of time can help reduce the spread of your own respiratory droplets (which are created by talking, breathing, shouting, singing, etc.), which may help alleviate the spread of COVID-19. Even when wearing a non-medical mask or facial covering, ensure that you refrain from touching your mask or face.

### 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 two layers of tightly woven material fabric (such as cotton or linen);
- be large enough to completely and comfortably cover the nose and mouth without gaping;
- be cleaned after each use;
- when removed, be stored in a bag until cleaned; the bag can be reused if washed properly.

Some masks also include a pocket to accommodate a paper towel or disposable coffee filter, for increased benefit.

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 placed on anyone unable to remove them without assistance or anyone who has trouble breathing.

### **Limitations of Non-Medical and Homemade Masks and Facial Coverings**

Homemade masks and facial coverings **are not medical devices and are not regulated like medical masks and respirators**. Their use poses a number of limitations:

- They have not been tested to recognized standards.
- The fabrics are not the same as 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 can be difficult to breathe through and can prevent you from getting the required amount of oxygen needed by your body.
- They may not be effective in blocking virus particles that may be transmitted by coughing or sneezing.

### **Provision of Facial Coverings and Non-Medical Masks**

Where physical distancing of at least 2 metres cannot be maintained, the University will provide facial coverings to faculties and services for distribution. Materials may be requested by designated representatives of faculties and services.

It is recommended to have your non-medical mask or facial covering at hand in the event that your physical distance is limited unexpectedly (e.g., in an elevator or in a common space).

### **How to Don/Doff a Facial Covering or Non-Medical Mask**

#### **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 gaping 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 may also 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.
- Some masks are made and fit differently. Learn how to wear *your* mask.

### Doffing

Ensure you wash your hands before and after removing your mask, or any time you wish to adjust your mask without removing it. You should 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 into 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.

Refer to the [infographic from Ottawa Public Health](#) and [video from the Government of Canada](#) for further clarification.

### 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 into the washing machine, using a hot cycle, and then dry thoroughly.
- Washing it thoroughly by hand if a washing machine is not available, using soap and warm/hot water. Allow it to dry completely before wearing it 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. Wearing gloves 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/doffing procedures.

**The best protection against COVID-19 for members of the University community is the regular washing of hands, 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 will continue to be provided for persons in those settings. **Otherwise, the University will not be providing gloves to members of its community as part of its COVID-19 response. Where necessary, individual exceptions may be made.**

### Face Shields

Face shields are primarily intended for front-line health care personnel and thus should not be used by the general University community. Where necessary, individual exceptions may be made.

#### Face Shields and the Use of 3D Printers

Health Canada recognizes that organizations may seek innovative manufacturing approaches to produce community protective equipment (CPE) such as face shields, including 3D printing, to respond to increased demand for individual workforces.

While Health Canada supports efforts to increase the availability of community protective equipment (CPE) such as face shields, these materials have technical considerations to ensure that they are safe, effective and of high quality and must meet certain regulatory standards. Detailed information including standards recommended by Health Canada for the production of face shields and face masks, the available test laboratories for product testing, and the relevant regulatory authorization pathways can be found on the [Health Canada website](#).

Face shields are an integral means of protection in medical and laboratory workspaces and will continue to be provided for persons in those settings. **Otherwise, the University will not be providing face shields to members of its community as part of its COVID-19 response.**

### Gowns and Lab Coats

Gowns and lab coats are a traditional component of laboratory health and safety equipment. Gowns and lab coats (in the context of COVID-19) are primarily intended for front-line health care personnel and thus should not be used by the general University community outside of normal laboratory operations. Where necessary, individual exceptions may be made.

Gowns and lab coats are an integral means of protection in medical and laboratory workspaces and will continue to be provided for persons in those settings. **Otherwise, the University will not be providing gowns and lab coats to members of its community as part of its COVID-19 response.**

#### Cleaning Gowns and Lab Coats During COVID-19

The University recognizes 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 amongst 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](#)