

# Mandatory Non-Medical Masks or Face Coverings By-law Frequently Asked Questions: General Public

Updated **September 23, 2020**

## What is Regional By-law 47-20?

On July 15, 2020, Halton Regional Council passed [By-law 47-20](#), making it mandatory to wear a non-medical mask or face covering in certain enclosed public places. The by-law is in effect as of 12:01 a.m. on July 22, 2020. Some individuals may be exempt from the by-law.

## Why was the By-law amended?

On September 16, 2020, Halton Regional Council approved amendments to the by-law. These amendments were based in part on feedback received from the Halton community, to ensure there is a consistent by-law in place across the region, and to further protect each other during the pandemic.

The amended by-law takes effect at 12:01 a.m. on September 23, 2020. To learn about the details of these amendments, please see Halton Region's [September 22 media release](#).

## What am I required to do under the new by-law?

Individuals five years of age and over are required to wear a non-medical mask or face covering in certain enclosed (indoor) public places in Halton Region, unless exemptions apply.

## Where am I required to wear a non-medical mask or face covering?

The by-law applies to certain indoor public places, including, but not limited to:

- premises (or any part of premises) used as places of business for the sale of goods or services;
- churches, mosques, synagogues, temples or other places of worship;
- community centres including indoor recreational facilities;
- libraries, art galleries, museums, aquariums, zoos and other similar facilities;
- community service agencies providing services to the public, including municipal administrative buildings;
- banquet halls, convention centres, arenas, stadiums and other event spaces;
- premises utilized as an open house, presentation centre, or other facility for real estate purposes;
- common areas of hotels, motels and other short-term rentals, such as lobbies, elevators, meeting rooms or other common use facilities;
- concert venues, theatres, cinemas, casinos and other entertainment facilities;
- public transportation and private transportation services (such as taxis, private limousine services, Uber, Lyft and other similar ride programs); and

- enclosed common areas of an apartment or condominium building, including the lobby elevator, laundry room and mailrooms.

When in Burlington, follow the Burlington By-law.

### Are there any indoor public places where masks are not required by the by-law?

Wearing of masks or face coverings is not required in these premises:

- schools and post-secondary institutions
- child care facilities
- indoor/outdoor day care and day camps
- correctional centres and jails
- hospitals, independent health facilities and offices of regulated health professionals
- court facilities and professional offices where clients receive purchased services (such as lawyer or accountant office) that are not open to members of the public except by appointment
- staff-only areas within a public place
- indoor areas of a building accessible to only employees

**Note:** This premises may have their own requirements for masks or face coverings. Contact before visiting.

### Do I need to wear a mask outside?

[Regional By-law 47-20](#) does not require individuals to wear a mask outdoors. However, Halton Region's Medical Officer of Health encourages all individuals to wear a non-medical mask or face covering in situations where physical distancing is a challenge, including crowded outdoor spaces.

### Who does not need to wear a mask?

Some individuals are exempt from the by-law and not all exemptions are visible. **Please be kind and supportive to those who may be exempt from wearing a mask.** No person shall be discriminated against for not wearing a non-medical mask or face covering due to an exemption.

The following individuals are exempt from the by-law, and are not required to provide proof of their exemption:

- persons under the age of five (5) years old;
- persons who have an underlying medical condition where wearing a Mask or Face Covering would inhibit the person's ability to breathe in any way;
- persons who may experience a negative impact to their emotional well-being or mental health;
- persons who have a developmental disability which inhibits their ability to wear a Non-Medical Mask or Face Covering;
- persons who have a disability whereby the wearing of a NonMedical Mask or Face Covering would limit their ability to reasonably communicate with others or otherwise present a hardship for a person or persons assisting the individual;
- persons unable to place or remove a Non-Medical Mask or Face Covering without assistance;
- persons temporarily removing their Non-Medical Mask / Face Covering when necessary for receiving services (such as having a meal), or while actively engaging in an athletic or fitness activity; and

- employees and agents of the person responsible for the Public Place within an area designated for them and not for public access, or within or behind a physical barrier; in both instances where a physical distance of at least 2 metres can be maintained at all times between the patron(s) and the employee(s).

### How will the by-law be enforced?

The primary goal is educate people about the importance of wearing of non-medical masks or face coverings in indoor public places. Halton Region Public Health, local by-law enforcement or Halton Regional Police Service may respond to reports of significant or on-going non-compliance. This may include enforcement measures such as set fines.

Halton residents and businesses are asked to do their part to protect the health of the community, and comply with the by-law.

If you have concerns about someone not wearing a mask or face covering, please keep in mind that there are a number of exemptions to the by-law and there is no requirement for people to prove they are exempt. Residents and business owners should take people at their word, and be kind and respectful. For additional questions about the by-law, please email [accesshalton@halton.ca](mailto:accesshalton@halton.ca) or call [311](tel:311).

### How can an incident of noncompliance with the by-law be reported?

Residents are asked to refrain from reporting individual non-compliance issues for now, as we all learn the new rules.

To report an incidence of significant or ongoing noncompliance, contact the Halton Regional Police Service COVID-19 Hotline: [905-825-4722](tel:905-825-4722). Staff will follow up within one business day.

### What should a customer do if they are refused entry to a business despite a legitimate exemption?

- If a customer has been refused entry, they should seek their own legal advice.
- It should be noted that no person shall be discriminated against for not wearing a non-medical mask/face covering.

### Where can I learn more about the by-law?

For more information about the by-law, please email [accesshalton@halton.ca](mailto:accesshalton@halton.ca) or call 311.

## Children

### Are children required to wear a mask or face covering under the by-law?

Individuals five years of age and over are required to wear a non-medical mask or face covering in certain enclosed (indoor) public places in Halton Region, unless exemptions apply. This is subject to the exemptions listed in the by-law, which include but are not limited to, indoor/outdoor day care and day camps.

Every parent or guardian accompanying a child that is in an indoor public place is also required to wear a non-medical mask or face covering.

### I have a child who is under the age of five. Are they required to wear a mask?

No. Children younger than five years of age are not required to wear a mask or face covering. It remains important to maintain physical distancing with those outside of the child's social circle.

### I have a child with special needs or an underlying medical condition. Are they required to wear a mask?

No. Children with special needs or an underlying medical condition are exempt.

### Are children required to wear a mask or face covering at child care facilities, indoor/outdoor day cares and camps or schools?

No. Children are not required to wear masks or face coverings at child care facilities, indoor/outdoor day cares and camps or schools (please note: these facilities may have their own policies and guidelines).

## Masks and face coverings

### What is a non-medical mask or face covering?

A non-medical mask or face covering is a mask, balaclava, bandanna, scarf, cloth or other similar item that covers the nose, mouth and chin without leaving a gap between the face and the mask.

### Can I wear a face shield instead of a mask?

A face shield is not a non-medical mask or face covering. Face shields are not a substitute for wearing a non-medical mask or face covering as they do not filter respiratory droplets. Wearing a face shield alone does not meet the requirements of the [Regional by-law](#). A face shield can be worn in addition to a non-medical mask or face covering.

### How do I properly wear a mask?

Masks are most effective when they are worn correctly.

- Wear a mask that fits well around your nose, mouth and chin without gaps.
- Clean your hands before putting on, taking off or adjusting your mask.
- Touch only the straps when putting on and taking off a mask.
- Avoid touching your mask while wearing it to avoid contaminating your hands.
- If reusable, store in a clean place and wash regularly.
- Discard non-reusable masks in a lined garbage bin if damp, soiled or damaged, and clean your hands afterwards.

Visit [covid19.ontario.ca](https://covid19.ontario.ca) or [canada.ca/covid19](https://canada.ca/covid19) for resources on how to safely put on and take off a mask.

What are the health effects of wearing a mask/face covering up to 8 work hours per day, for an extended period of time? Not to mention additional time in the mask in non-work related activities.

Health care workers routinely wear masks for prolonged periods as part of usual care without adverse effects. Research evidence indicates wearing a mask for a prolonged period of time may increase the risk of developing facial skin lesions, irritant dermatitis (skin inflammation) or worsening acne.

What's the safest face mask option for everyday use?

Homemade non-medical masks are safe and if worn properly, can reduce the spread of respiratory droplets.

Non-medical masks or face coverings can be made using cotton shirts, bandanas and other readily available materials. [Refer to Health Canada's instructions for making homemade non-medical masks \(external\)](#).

A good cloth mask or face covering should:

- cover over nose, mouth and chin, without gaps and be easy to breathe through;
- fit securely to the head with ties or ear loops, without gaping or impairing vision;
- be made of at least two layers of tightly woven material, such as cotton or linen;
- be comfortable, to reduce the need for adjustments when wearing;
- maintain its shape after washing and drying; and
- not contain non-breathable materials such as plastic.

Everyone has personal preferences. Try different styles of non-medical masks and use what is most comfortable for you as long as it meets the criteria listed above.

Do face shields protect me in the same way as a mask of face covering?

A face shield is not an equal alternative to wearing a mask.

A face shield may provide additional protection for the wearer against droplets expelled from another person, however, these droplets may still be inhaled around the shield. Similarly, respiratory droplets expelled by the wearer may escape around the sides of the face shield, providing less protection to other individuals nearby.

Because of the lack of a good facial seal, face shields should not be used alone. A face shield may be used in addition to a non-medical mask or face covering.

Do we know if COVID-19 can infect people through the eyes and whether people should additionally be wearing goggles, face shields or eyewear?

Current evidence suggests that the main mode of transmission of COVID-19 is through close contact with an infected person through inhaling their respiratory droplets or touching our face with contaminated hands.

Transmission of the virus through the eyes is not common but possible. We do not recommend wearing eye protection for the general public. Eye protection is only recommended for health care workers working in direct patient care settings or when required by an employer.

### Where can I get a non-medical mask or face covering?

Non-medical masks or face coverings can be made using cotton shirts, bandanas and other readily available materials. Refer to [Health Canada's](#) instructions for making homemade non-medical masks.

Non-medical masks or face coverings are also widely available for sale at pharmacies, grocery and other retail stores.

For additional questions on how to get a mask or face covering, please email [accesshalton@halton.ca](mailto:accesshalton@halton.ca) or call [311](#).

### Do masks (respirators) with an exhalation valve protect me in the same way as other masks or face coverings?

Masks or face coverings with an exhalation valve do not filter virus particles when you breathe out. In order to protect others nearby, wear a non-medical mask, balaclava, bandana, scarf, cloth or other similar item that covers the nose, mouth and chin without leaving a gap between the face and the mask.

## Athletic locations and physical activity

### When participating in indoors sports (for example, gymnastics), are athletes and coaches required to wear masks?

All persons aged five and over must wear a mask when indoors. There are exemptions, including the temporary removal when engaging in physical or fitness activity.

Unless a person is engaging in such an activity, they are required to wear a mask.

To clarify, if they are in the class or training session they are exempt however, the physical distancing requirement should still be followed.

### In a gym or community centre, would people be required to wear a mask while walking to and from their machine/equipment/class but not while actually on the machine/equipment or in the exercise class?

If a person is not engaging in physical or fitness activity and they are indoors within a public place, they are required to wear a mask.

### What does “actively engaging in an athletic or fitness activity” mean?

Actively engaging means you are performing the activity. Examples of which are: lifting weights, yoga, running on the treadmill or using other gym equipment. When you are actively using these items or performing these activities, you are exempt from wearing a non-medical mask or face covering.

As soon as you stop actively engaging in such an activity, you must wear your non-medical or face covering, unless another exemption applies. Examples of which are: after you finish your yoga class and are in the change room, you should be wearing a mask; after lifting weights and while standing in the gym speaking to staff at the reception counter, you should be wearing a mask.