

# COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) Universal Masking (wearing of masks by non-health care professionals)

Earlier this month, Canada's Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Theresa Tam, endorsed the universal use of non-medical masks as one measure to aid in the fight against the novel coronavirus. This endorsement was recently echoed by Public Health Ontario.

While handwashing, physical distancing, staying home while sick and frequent cleaning and disinfecting of high touch surfaces are the best ways of controlling the spread of the virus, non-medical masks help us protect others from our germs.

**“MY mask protects YOU; YOUR mask protects ME.”**

**Southwestern Public Health's Medical Officer of Health also endorses wearing non-medical masks if you cannot maintain 6 feet of physical distance (shopping areas, stores, public transportation, etc.).**

## **Universal Masking Best Practices:**

- Bring your non-medical mask with you every time you leave your home.
- Store your non-medical mask inside a zip-close plastic bag alongside a bottle of hand sanitizer.
- Clean your hands before and after putting your mask on, after touching your mask, and after taking your mask off.
- Make sure your mask always covers your mouth and nose and avoid touching the mask while wearing it.
- Drop your non-medical mask into the zip-close plastic bag after wearing it.
- Wash cloth masks on a hot cycle after each use. Throw disposable masks into a garbage bin.

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## **Mandate to Wear a Mask:**

As of May 27, 2020, there is not a current government directive that mandates universal masking.

In addition to the mandated authority of the Provincial Government, the local Medical Officer of Health can make a Section 22 Order requiring the use of non-medical masks. As May 27, 2020 this has not happened anywhere in the province, including in the Southwestern Public Health region.

Businesses have been tasked by the provincial government with reopening in a manner that is consistent with existing public health measures (hand hygiene, cleaning and disinfection, physical distancing, etc.). They can mandate universal masking by their employees as they can with other pieces of safety equipment designed to mitigate risk and prevent illness or injury. This may be particularly true in circumstances where it is very difficult for employees to maintain physical distance from each other while performing their normal work tasks, or when helping customers/clients. Shields/barriers cannot be installed in all circumstances. The use of non-medical masks by employees would protect the other employees and the customers, but not the wearer of the mask

Businesses may also mandate that customers wear masks to enter their physical locations.