

| **guide** |**Non-Medical Face Mask Guidelines**

(Updated as of Oct. 28, 2020. New and updated content highlighted)

Our school year is well underway and we continue to adjust our measures and practices to comply with AHS guidelines in order to limit the spread of Covid-19.

We all share a responsibility to follow safety measures for ourselves and others. As has been shared by Alberta Health Services (AHS), we cannot stop COVID-19 from entering our schools, but we can continue to minimize the risk of infection and spread. Wearing non-surgical medical masks has proven to be one of the most significant actions we can take to limit the spread of the virus to others as well as to protect ourselves from potentially catching the virus. **As defined by AHS, non-medical face masks fit securely above the nose and below the mouth and allow for clear breathing.**

Information is evolving each day however we do know the most common method of transmission of the virus is through respiratory droplets from contaminated people. This is why consistent mask use is so vital for our collective protection and to limit the spread.

AHS originally provided direction to all school boards in August 2020 relating to the use of non-medical masks and criteria for mask exemptions. An **update** to this information was provided **Oct. 8, 2020** entitled [Guidance for School Re-Entry](#). We encourage all staff to be familiar with the contents of the updated document, particularly in relation to mask usage. Detailed information on mask use can be found on pages 5-7 of the document.

The CBE continues to exceed current direction provided by AHS and Alberta Education by requiring non-medical masks be worn by all students in kindergarten - Grade12 and all system staff. AHS has updated their general public mask guidance document and the version provided May 2020 has been superseded by guidance released in October, 2020 that is available here: [AHS Guidance for Wearing of Non-Medical Face Masks for the General Public](#). Additionally, the City of Calgary's bylaw stating all persons over the age of two are required to wear masks in indoor public spaces remains in effect.

We acknowledge that masks are only one measure in a comprehensive risk mitigation strategy to prevent the spread of the virus. The effectiveness of a risk mitigation strategy includes use of a variety of approaches to reduce risk, including:

- completing the daily health screening checklist – updated October 2020 version can be found [here](#);
- staying home when sick, isolating immediately if you have COVID-19 symptoms
- washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds;
- sanitizing hands using approved products when hand washing ability is limited;
- practicing physical distancing and maintaining cohort integrity;

- using physical barriers in cases where the ability to physically distance is limited;
- cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces; and
- Properly wearing a mask (reusable/washable cloth masks or disposable non-medical masks), particularly when physical distancing is not possible.

Supporting Mask Use

Students and staff who struggle to follow AHS or CBE guidelines regarding masking should be gently corrected. If a student or staff member arrives to school without a mask for the day, they must be provided a disposable mask before entering our classrooms and sites. Schools should monitor the distribution of disposable masks and in recurring cases, should address the concern from a place of education and support.

It is the CBE's expectation that staff and parents/guardians continue to support all risk mitigation practices in our schools. In the event a student repeatedly and intentionally fails to follow guidelines, the school may respond consistent with CBE's [progressive discipline administrative regulation](#).

Non-medical masks are not required while students are seated in the classroom during instruction if following the physical distancing guidance of 2 metres. If close contact between students, or students and teachers/staff is occurring as a result of classroom activities, non-medical masks should be used for the duration of this activity. Mask wearing is required in all common areas within a school such as hallways, washrooms and learning commons.

Mask Exemptions

There will be circumstances in which staff and students will be eligible for mask accommodations or exemptions as identified in the AHS guidelines. Exemptions may be available for:

- persons who are unable to place, use, or remove a non-medical face mask due (due to age, developmental or physical reasons)
- a medical condition or disability (mental or physical) or
- any grounds protected under the Alberta Human Rights Act

Principals should work with families to assess whether a partial or full exemption from mask use is appropriate for their child. Partial exemptions (e.g. use in common spaces, more frequent breaks) or time-limited exemption may be possible while students or staff increase their ability and tolerance to apply, remove and use a mask. Wherever possible, those who have an exemption from wearing a mask must maintain appropriate physical distancing measures **and observe other risk mitigation strategies** while being included in learning and work activities. In addition, those with mask exemptions may be able to wear a face shield to mitigate risk to a lesser degree.

Student requests for exemptions should be made to the school principal. More information can be found in [Exemptions from Mask Use | Students](#).

Staff seeking exemptions should speak with their leader and CBE's Employee Health Resource Centre (EHRC). Please refer to CBE's [Temporary COVID-19 Related Accommodation Process](#).

Mask Breaks

Staff and students are encouraged to take mask breaks only when they are able to maintain a physical distance from others. When taking a mask break, it is important that protocols for taking off and putting on the face mask are followed. Visit alberta.ca/masks for more information. Additionally, due to the frequency with which masks must be removed throughout the day, a method or plan for the storage of personal masks should be in place.

Frequency and duration of mask breaks for students and staff may vary based on the age and size of the group. Younger students may require more frequent breaks. For example, 15-minute mask breaks every one-two hours may be sufficient for some. All persons can take a mask break anytime they require one, provided other risk mitigation measures are being followed.

Mask breaks may look different from school to school, depending on the available space to do so safely. When indoors, mask breaks for an entire class of students or multiple classes may be challenging. This can be achieved during physical activity, recess or building in time for a break outside. Schools and work locations may also consider a designated mask break area.

Overall, mask wearing and physical distancing are two effective measures to reduce transmission.

What Constitutes a Non-Medical Face Mask?

When worn properly, a person wearing a non-medical mask or face coverage can reduce the spread of self-generated infectious respiratory droplets; [Health Canada Non-Medical Masks and Face Coverings information](#)

- Non-medical face masks **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 2 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
- Non-medical face masks **should not**:
 - Be shared with others
 - Impair vision or interfere with tasks
 - Be placed on children under the age of 2 years
 - 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
 - No be placed on anyone unable to remove them without assistance or anyone who has trouble breathing

Be equipped with an exhalation valve as they do not protect others from your respiratory droplets and do not limit the spread of the virus

Non-Medical Face Mask Guidelines General

Non-Medical Face Mask Guidelines for Schools - General	
Who must wear a mask?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ school staff ▪ students (K-12) ▪ students and staff in Before and After School Care programs ▪ parents/guardians ▪ guest employees ▪ district staff ▪ service providers ▪ anyone entering the school
Who should not wear a mask?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ children under the age of two ▪ persons unable to place, use or remove a non-medical face mask without assistance (due to age, ability, or developmental status – see exemptions process) ▪ persons unable to wear a non-medical face mask due to a mental or physical concern or limitation (see exemptions process) ▪ persons consuming food or drink in designated areas ▪ persons engaged in physical exercise (other risk mitigation strategies in place) ▪ persons providing care or assistance to a person with a disability where a non-medical mask would hinder that caregiving or assistance ▪ persons engaging in services that require the temporary removal of non-medical mask (articulation, pronunciation skills, etc.); other risk mitigation strategies in place ▪ spaces where physical barriers have been installed between persons
When must masks be worn?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ while travelling on a city or school bus ▪ when entering and exiting the school building ▪ while in shared school spaces and high traffic areas (bathrooms, hallways, etc.) ▪ whenever an individual is outside their designated cohort(s) ▪ when any individual is engaging with an individual who is not part of their identified cohort(s) ▪ when COVID-19 symptomatic students moved to an infirmary and supporting staff are waiting for the student to be picked up ▪ Grades K-3: within the cohort classroom whenever physical distancing is difficult to maintain for prolonged periods of time (i.e. when close contact between students or students and staff is occurring as a result of classroom activities, non-medical masks should be used during the duration of the activity by all staff and those students capable of consistently using the non-medical face masks correctly and safely) ▪ Grades 4-12: within the cohort classroom whenever physical distancing is difficult to maintain for prolonged periods of time (i.e. when close contact between students or students and staff is occurring as a result of classroom activities, non-medical masks should be used by staff and students during the duration of the activity) ▪ Grades 4-12: during brief, causal interactions where physical distancing is not possible or is unpredictable

When are masks not required?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ K-3: when students are working within their cohort when the integrity of the cohort is preserved▪ Grades 4-12: when students are seated within their cohort(s) and physical distancing is achieved, including physical distancing from the teacher (teacher remains within a designated teaching space)▪ Teacher may remove mask to provide instruction provided teacher remains within a designated teaching space▪ K-6: during cohort recess breaks where the integrity of the cohort is preserved and other transmission risk mitigation strategies are used▪ during any planned mask break where other safety measures are implemented▪ when eating or drinking (other risk mitigation strategies in place)▪ when engaging in an athletic or fitness activity (physical distance measures in place)▪ when staff are working with students with special education needs where wearing a face covering would hinder the delivery of program
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Non-Medical Face Mask Guidelines by Division

Non-Medical Face Mask Guidelines for Kindergarten to Grade 3	
What is a K-3 cohort?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a group of students and staff who remain together to decrease the number of close contacts ▪ the cohort stays together throughout the day to minimize the number of different staff and mixing of students ▪ based on varied school contexts, lunch may occur in the designated classroom or in a shared space with another cohort; if sharing a lunch space with another cohort, cohorts will remain discreet and physical distancing measures will be in place
When must K-3 students wear face masks?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ while travelling on a city or school bus ▪ when entering and exiting the school building ▪ while in shared school spaces and high traffic areas (bathrooms, hallways, etc.) ▪ whenever an individual is outside their designated cohort(s) ▪ when any individual is engaging with an individual who is not part of their identified cohort(s) ▪ within the cohort classroom whenever physical distancing is difficult to maintain for prolonged periods of time (i.e. when close contact between students or students and staff is occurring as a result of classroom activities, non-medical masks will be used during the duration of the activity by all staff and those students capable of consistently using the non-medical face masks correctly and safely)
When are masks not required?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ when students are working within their cohort when the integrity of the cohort is preserved ▪ teacher may remove mask to provide instruction provided teacher remains within a designated teaching space with physical distancing measures in place ▪ during cohort recess breaks where the integrity of the cohort is preserved and other transmission risk mitigation strategies are used ▪ during any planned mask break where other safety measures are implemented ▪ when eating or drinking (other risk mitigation strategies in place) ▪ when engaging in an athletic or fitness activity (physical distance measures in place)
What other risk mitigations strategies are in place to reduce transmission of COVID-19?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ staying home when sick ▪ isolating immediately if COVID-19 symptoms arise ▪ physical distancing ▪ washing hands with soap and water ▪ sanitizing hands ▪ practicing respiratory etiquette ▪ sanitizing high touch surfaces ▪ maintaining cohort integrity ▪ limiting non-essential guests in the building ▪ staggering entry, recess and lunch, and pick-up times ▪ designating entrances and traffic flow patterns in hallways ▪ displaying signage to support the above strategies

Non-Medical Face Mask Guidelines by Division

Non-Medical Face Mask Guidelines for Grades 4-6	
What is a Grade 4-6 cohort?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a group of students and staff who remain together to decrease the number of close contacts ▪ the cohort stays together throughout the day to minimize the number of different staff and mixing of students ▪ based on varied school contexts, lunch may occur in the designated classroom or in a shared space with another cohort; if sharing a lunch space with another cohort, cohorts will remain discreet and physical distancing measures will be in place
When must grade 4-6 students wear face masks?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ while travelling on a city or school bus ▪ when entering and exiting the school building ▪ while in shared school spaces and high traffic areas (bathrooms, hallways, etc.) ▪ whenever an individual is outside their designated cohort(s) ▪ when any individual is engaging with an individual who is not part of their identified cohort(s) ▪ within the cohort classroom whenever physical distancing is difficult to maintain for prolonged periods of time (i.e. when close contact between students or students and staff is occurring as a result of classroom activities, non-medical masks should be used by staff and students during the duration of the activity) ▪ during brief, causal interactions where physical distancing is not possible or is unpredictable
When are masks not required?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ when students are seated within their cohort(s) and physical distancing is in place, including proper physical distancing from the teacher (teacher remains within a specific teaching space) ▪ teacher may remove mask to provide instruction provided teacher remains within a designated teaching space with physical distancing measures in place ▪ during cohort recess breaks where the integrity of the cohort is preserved and other transmission risk mitigation strategies are used ▪ during any planned mask break where other safety measures are implemented ▪ when eating or drinking (other risk mitigation strategies in place) ▪ when engaging in an athletic or fitness activity (physical distance measures in place)
What other risk mitigations strategies are in place to reduce transmission of COVID-19?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ staying home when sick ▪ isolating immediately if COVID-19 symptoms arise ▪ physical distancing ▪ washing hands with soap and water ▪ sanitizing hands ▪ practicing respiratory etiquette ▪ sanitizing high touch surfaces ▪ maintaining cohort integrity ▪ limiting non-essential guests in the building ▪ staggering entry, recess and lunch, and pick-up times ▪ designating entrances and traffic flow patterns in hallways ▪ displaying signage to support the above strategies

Non-Medical Face Mask Guidelines by Division

Non-Medical Face Mask Guidelines for Grades 7-9*	
What is a Grade 7-9 cohort?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a group of students and staff who remain together to decrease the number of close contacts ▪ homeroom or grade group in a classroom ▪ the cohort stays together throughout the day to minimize the number of different staff and mixing of students ▪ plus two option classes, up to a maximum of three designated cohorts ▪ when possible, teachers move to students rather than students moving to a different classroom ▪ based on varied school contexts, lunch may occur in the homeroom/grade group classroom or in a shared space with other cohorts; if sharing a lunch space with other cohorts, cohorts will remain discreet and physical distancing measures will be in place
When must grade 7-9 students wear face masks?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ while travelling on a city or school bus ▪ when entering and exiting the school building ▪ while in shared school spaces and high traffic areas (bathrooms, hallways, etc.) ▪ whenever an individual is outside their designated cohort(s) ▪ when any individual is engaging with an individual who is not part of their identified cohort(s) ▪ within the cohort classroom whenever physical distancing is difficult to maintain for prolonged periods of time (i.e. when close contact between students or students and staff is occurring as a result of classroom activities, non-medical mask should be used by staff and students during the duration of the activity) ▪ during brief, causal interactions where physical distancing is not possible or is unpredictable
When are masks not required?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ when students are seated within their cohort(s) and physical distancing is achieved, including proper physical distancing from the teacher (teacher remains within a specific teaching space) ▪ teacher may remove mask to provide instruction provided teacher remains within a designated teaching space with physical distancing measures in place ▪ during any planned mask break where other safety measures are implemented ▪ when eating or drinking (other risk mitigation strategies in place) ▪ when engaging in an athletic or fitness activity (physical distance measures in place)
What other risk mitigations strategies are in place to reduce transmission of COVID-19?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ staying home when sick ▪ isolating immediately if COVID-19 symptoms arise ▪ physical distancing ▪ washing hands with soap and water ▪ sanitizing hands ▪ practicing respiratory etiquette ▪ sanitizing high touch surfaces ▪ maintaining cohort integrity ▪ limiting non-essential guests in the building ▪ staggered entry, class breaks, lunch, and pick-up times ▪ designated entrances and traffic flow patterns in hallways ▪ signage to support the above strategies

*Cohorting may not be available in all setting

Non-Medical Face Mask Guidelines by Division

Non-Medical Face Mask Guidelines for Grades 10-12*	
What is a Grade 10-12 cohort?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ cohorting at high school will be different than in other divisions - best practice is to consider each class as a cohort and schools with full year courses will decrease the number of cohorts ▪ when possible, teachers move to students rather than students moving to a different classroom ▪ schools must maintain class seating plans and attendance records ▪ based on varied school contexts, lunch may occur in varied spaces adhering to the 100 seated maximum in each space; physical distancing measures will be in place
When must grade 10-12 students wear face masks?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ while travelling on a city or school bus ▪ when entering and exiting the school building ▪ while in shared school spaces and high traffic areas (bathrooms, hallways, etc.) ▪ whenever an individual is outside their designated cohort(s) ▪ when any individual is engaging with an individual who is not part of their identified cohort(s) ▪ within the cohort classroom whenever physical distancing is difficult to maintain for prolonged periods of time (i.e. when close contact between students or students and staff is occurring as a result of classroom activities, non-medical mask should be used by staff and students during the duration of the activity) ▪ during brief, causal interactions where physical distancing is not possible or is unpredictable
When are masks not required?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ when students are seated within their cohort(s) and physical distancing is achieved, including proper physical distancing from the teacher (teacher remains within a specific teaching space) ▪ teacher may remove mask to provide instruction provided teacher remains within a designated teaching space with physical distancing measures in place ▪ during any planned mask break where other safety measures are implemented ▪ when eating or drinking (other risk mitigation strategies in place) ▪ when engaging in an athletic or fitness activity (physical distance measures in place)
What other risk mitigations strategies are in place to reduce transmission of COVID-19?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ staying home when sick ▪ isolating immediately if COVID-19 symptoms arise ▪ physical distancing ▪ washing hands with soap and water ▪ sanitizing hands ▪ practicing respiratory etiquette ▪ sanitizing high touch surfaces ▪ maintaining cohort integrity ▪ limiting non-essential guests in the building ▪ staggering entry, class breaks, lunch, and end of class times ▪ designating entrances and traffic flow patterns in hallways ▪ displaying signage to support the above strategies

*Cohorting may not be available in all settings

Commonly asked questions:

Q: I have students in three different schools and the rules for mask wearing are different in each school. Why?

A: The Calgary Board of Education created Non-Medical Face Mask Guidelines in response to COVID-19 and the reopening of schools. These guidelines are in alignment with provincial expectations. Within the guidelines, it states non-medical masks must be worn by students Kindergarten to grade twelve. The Kindergarten to grade three environments have more flexibility around mask use than grades four to twelve. These points of flexibility are based on a child's understanding, experience with mask wearing, age appropriate level to ensure safety for themselves and their school community, and the ability to physical distance within the cohort. The flexibility built into the guidelines provide principals with discretion to apply mask use based on their school context including class size, student population, and physical structure and seating within classrooms.

Q: Why are some schools asking students to wear masks outside?

A: When physical distancing is not possible or predictable, it is required to wear a mask, even outdoors.. Students may not be able to ensure safe distancing measures when lining up to enter the school, when on play structures or equipment with limited space, or working in small groups. In these cases, wearing a mask is required.

Q: Should parents/guardians wear masks on the playground when dropping off and picking up their children?

A: Wearing a mask when physical distancing is not possible or predictable is a recommended risk mitigation strategy. We encourage all adults to promote safety by modelling mask wearing, physical distancing and other risk mitigation strategies. It is important to take reasonable measure and be responsive to changing contexts.