

guide**Non-Medical Face Mask Guidelines**

The return to a new school year is a time of great excitement and anticipation. For many this means changes in routines for students, staff and families. This school year will be no exception as we adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic realities in our community.

As we prepare for a return to school, we all share a responsibility to follow safety measures for ourselves and others. As shared by Alberta Health Services (AHS), we cannot stop COVID-19 from entering our schools, but we can minimize the risk of infection and spread. To this end, Calgary Board of Education (CBE) will approach safety measures from the perspective of helping students learn new behaviours and strategies to stay healthy in a world where COVID-19 continues to be a threat.

AHS has stated that wearing a mask can be an additional measure that students and staff can take to protect others by preventing respiratory droplets from contaminating people, surfaces and/or objects. AHS provided direction to all school boards relating to non-medical masks and mask exemptions. CBE will exceed current direction provided by AHS and Alberta Education by requiring non-medical masks be worn by all students in kindergarten - Grade12 and all staff members. In conjunction with the City of Calgary's bylaw stating all persons over the age of two are required to wear masks in indoor public spaces, all persons entering schools are required to do so as well.

See: [AHS Guidance for Wearing of Non-Medical Face Masks for the General Public](#)

Masks are only one part of the risk mitigation strategy implemented in schools and worksites. The effectiveness of a risk mitigation strategy includes the use of a variety of approaches to reduce risk, including:

- staying home when sick, isolating immediately if you have COVID-19 symptoms cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose or sore throat;
- washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds;
- practicing physical distancing and maintaining cohort integrity;
- sanitizing hands and high-touch surfaces; and
- wearing a mask (reusable/washable cloth masks or disposable non-medical masks).

Supporting Mask Use

As we consider the re-entry of over 125,000 students to CBE schools, we recognize that our students may have little or no experience with safety practices such as physical distancing and mask wearing. As we would with any other learning, we will assess each student's level of understanding and provide them with the teaching, guidance, coaching and encouragement at an age appropriate level, to ensure safety for themselves and their school community. These mask guidelines align with the consistent practice of developing citizenship and a shared social responsibility. Habits are hard to break and forming new habits takes time. Students and staff who struggle to follow AHS or CBE guidelines will be gently corrected and supported over time.

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

Age, developmental ability, grade configurations and course options have been taken into consideration when developing mask guidelines. To reduce physical contact within schools, students will be assigned to cohorts. Cohort configuration will vary by division levels and by schools.

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 can 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 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](#).

Provision of Masks

The Government of Alberta is distributing reusable cloth masks to students and staff.

In addition, the CBE will be providing clear masks for teachers supporting students who meet the Alberta Special Education Coding Criteria for Hearing Disability (55) and Deafness (45). Clear masks worn by teachers will support access to instructional language for Deaf and Hard of Hearing students who benefit from the visual language support of lip reading and facial expression.

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 the face mask are followed. Visit alberta.ca/masks for more information.

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.

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 (ie. 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

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 ▪ 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 ▪ 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 ▪ 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 settings

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) ▪ 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