COVID-19 mask use: Types of masks and respirators

This advice is intended for the general public and is **not** intended for occupational health purposes, including health care settings.

The table compares different types of masks and respirators. Refer to it to help you decide which mask or respirator to choose. Some products are easier to find or purchase than others and costs can vary.

Non-medical masks, medical masks and respirators can all be used in the community.

The effectiveness of non-medical masks in preventing the spread of COVID-19 can vary based on many factors. It depends on material, construction, fit and proper use. Some non-medical masks can help prevent the spread of COVID-19 similarly to medical masks if they:

- fit well
- have multiple layers, including at least 2 layers of breathable tightly woven fabric (such as cotton) **and**
- have an effective middle filter layer

In general, while non-medical masks can help prevent the spread of COVID-19, medical masks and respirators provide better protection. No matter which type of mask you choose, proper fit is a key factor in its effectiveness.

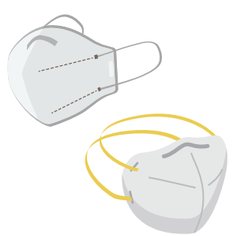
There are currently no standards for non-medical masks in Canada. Medical masks and respirators sold in Canada are required to meet established standards for filtration, breathability and fluid resistance.

To help prevent you and others from being exposed to COVID-19, make sure whatever mask or respirator you choose is:

- well constructed
- well fitting
- worn properly

Don't use masks or respirators with exhalation valves. They allow infectious respiratory particles to escape. They do **not** help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

For more information
Visit: Canada.ca/coronavirus

Types of masks and respirators	Availability	Construction	Fit	Regulatory considerations and standards
Non-Medical Mask  	Homemade or commercially available. Available in many different sizes and fabrics.	Should be made of at least 2 layers of tightly woven breathable fabric, like cotton. It should also have a third, middle layer of filter-type fabric, like non-woven polypropylene, to improve filtration. May contain a pocket to insert a removable filter. May be available with transparent windows. Reusable or disposable. Reusable if washed when dirty or damp.	Fit varies depending on the shape and style of the mask. The fit can be improved by using different methods, such as adjusting ties, bands or ear loops and flexible nosepiece (if included).	No standards or regulations exist for non-medical masks in Canada. Some international standards are available (**AFNOR** in Europe, **ASTM** in the U.S.). Non-medical masks aren't considered medical devices under the Medical Devices Regulations. The effectiveness of non-medical masks to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 varies widely, and depends on: • materials used • construction • fit • proper use
Medical Mask **(Procedure or Surgical Mask)** 	Commercially available. Available in adult and child sizes.	Construction materials may vary but must meet established filtration standards. Typically single use and disposable, but may be reused until visibly dirty, damp or damaged.	Fit varies depending on the size and features of your face. The fit can be improved by using different methods, such as adjusting ties, or ear loops and adjusting the flexible nosepiece.	Some disposable non-medical masks may look like medical masks but don't meet regulatory standards. Look for a medical mask that has **ASTM F2100** or **EN 14683** on the box label. This means that this mask has been tested and meets international standards for: • particle and bacterial filtration • breathability • fluid resistance • flammability of materials There are no recognized standards in Canada for transparent medical masks.
Respirators 	Commercially available. May be hard to find smaller sizes for children.	Construction materials may vary but must meet filtration standards for respirators. The design allows for a better fit than a medical mask. Not available with transparent windows. Typically single use and disposable, but may be reused until visibly dirty, damp or damaged.	Designed to fit snug on the face. On some respirators, the fit can be improved by adjusting ties, bands or ear loops and the nosepiece. A respirator worn in the community doesn't need fit testing.	Make sure that your respirator is approved by Health Canada. NIOSH N95 respirators with an approval number stamped on the device, represented as **TC-84A-####n**. 95PFE products or CSA certified CA-N95 and CA-N99 type respirators as marked according to the **CSA Z94.4.1** standard. KN95 respirators that meet standard **GB 2626-2019**. KF94 respirators that meet standard **KMOEL–2017-64**. FFP2 respirators that meet standard **EN 149-2001.**