



Guidance on non-medical mask use in schools

A non-medical mask is any mask that may be homemade or commercially made. The mask is not regulated for medical use.

Wearing a mask is an additional tool that, when combined with the Safe 6, can further reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Masks alone will not stop the spread of COVID-19.

The role of masks in schools

As of December 21st, 2020, students in grade 4 and up are required to wear a non-medical mask in all common areas in the school. This includes hallways and common gathering areas. Masks are not specifically required for students under the age of 10 within the school, however they may choose to wear a mask if they wish.

Students do not need to wear a mask in a classroom setting if they are physically distanced from each other. Students must maintain a 1 metre distance from other students in the classroom and 2 meters from teachers and other staff. Everyone must maintain 2 metres of distance from each other when outside of the classroom.

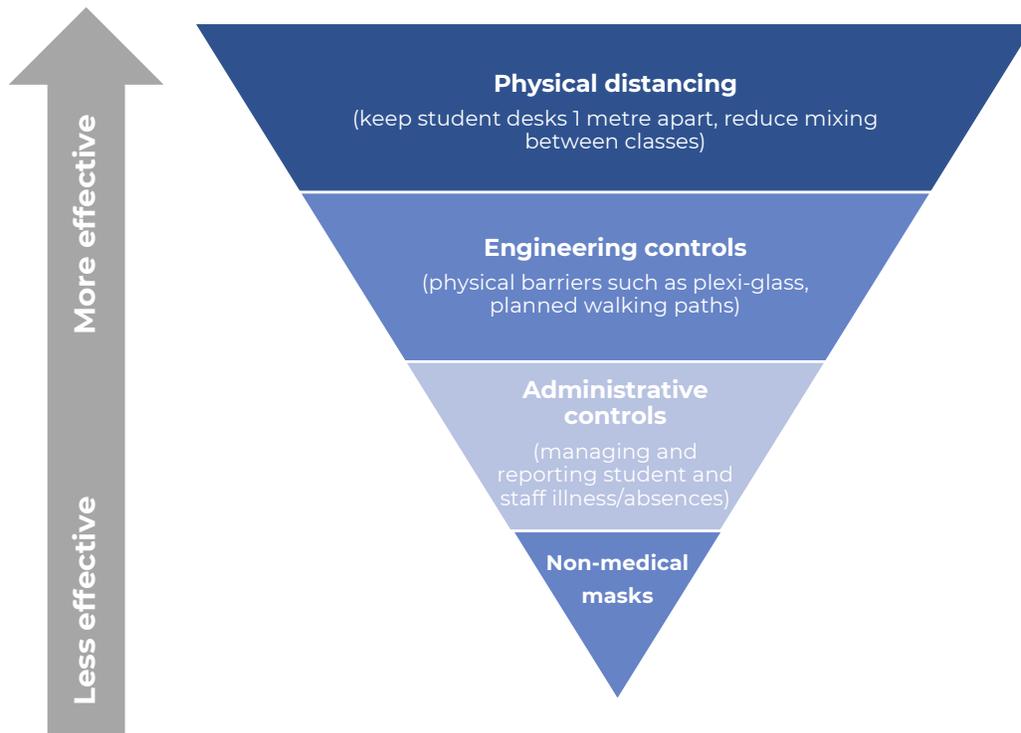
All students 5 years and older taking the school bus must now wear a mask. Children who are 4 years old and taking the bus are encouraged to wear a mask. School bus drivers must also wear a mask.

Other critical layers of protection

While masks can play a role in helping to reduce transmission in a school setting, they are one of the many layers of protection recommended in the [Guidelines for K-12 school settings](#).

Masks are a final layer that should be considered after other more protective measures are in place including safe spacing between students and staff, enhanced cleaning and disinfection, frequent hand washing and staying home when sick.

Hierarchy of infection prevention and control measures for reducing transmission risk of COVID-19



Normalizing the use of masks in schools

Parents/caregivers and teachers can help prepare students by explaining, in an age appropriate way, why it is important to wear a mask at school in certain situations.

For some students, wearing a mask or seeing their peers and teachers in masks can be frightening. It may be helpful to normalize the use of masks through play. Have them practice putting on a mask to slowly get them comfortable with the change.

With a variety of mask options available, it is important to ensure a student's mask fits correctly and comfortably. Having a supply of several masks will allow students and teachers to change them frequently and always have a clean one available when it is needed.

Non-medical masks should be:

- large enough to completely and comfortably cover the nose and mouth without gaping;
- allow for easy breathing;
- fit securely to the head with ties or ear loops;

- maintain its shape after washing and drying;
- be changed as soon as possible if damp or dirty; and
- be comfortable.

A non-medical mask can be made of 2 or 3 layers of material fabric, such as cotton or linen, to make sure that droplets don't pass through the fabric. 3 layers is best, but masks with 2 layers are still effective.

Masks should only be used by 1 person and should never be shared. When wearing a mask, it's important to try not to touch it. If someone touches their mask or face, they should immediately wash their hands.

See the [How to wear a non-medical mask poster](#) for more information on how to properly put on and take off a mask or [watch this video](#).

How to put on a non-medical mask

1. Wash your hands:
 - in soap and water for at least 20 seconds; or
 - with a hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
2. Inspect the mask and make sure it's clean and dry.
3. Make sure your hair is away from your face.
4. Place the mask over your nose and mouth and secure it to your head or ears with ties or elastic loops.
5. Wash your hands.

How to remove a non-medical mask

You should remove and change your mask if it becomes damp or soiled. Homemade or cloth masks should be cleaned and changed often. Holes and damage to cloth masks will further reduce their protective benefits.

1. Wash your hands.
2. If you're disposing of your mask, put it in a wastebasket lined with a plastic bag.
3. If you plan to reuse your mask, remove the mask and put in the washing machine. You can also put the mask in a paper bag if you do not have immediate access to a washing machine.
4. Wash your hands.

How to clean non-medical masks

1. Wash it according to the directions of the original material; warmer water is better.
2. Dry it completely, if possible, in a dryer and on a warm or hot setting.
3. In order to minimize the spread of germs and particles, do not shake dirty masks.