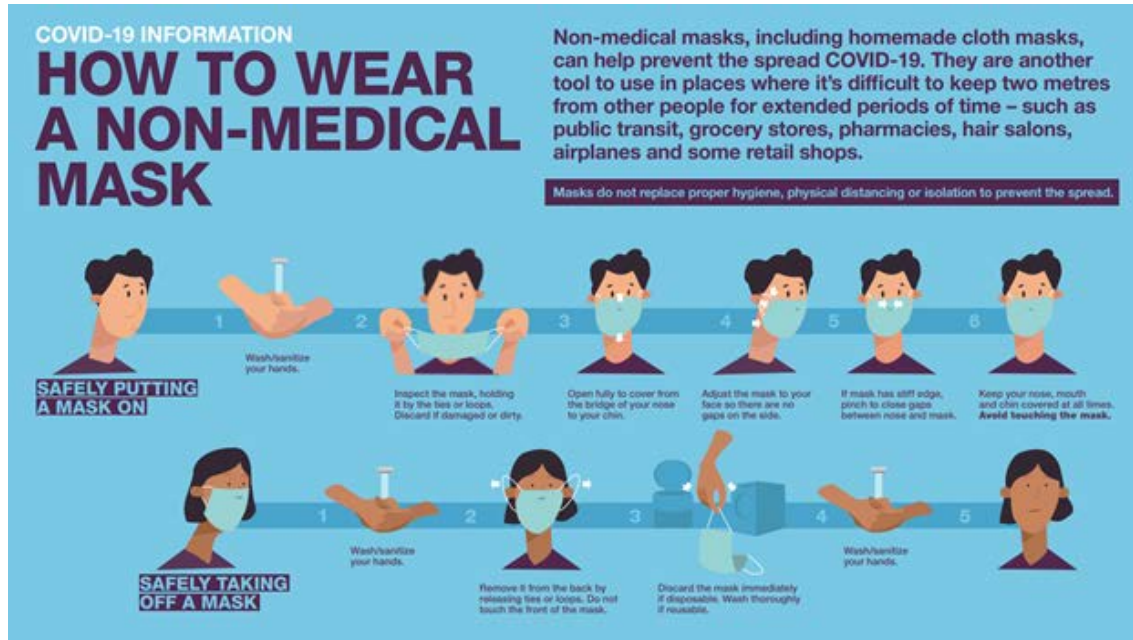


Introduction

Publication Date: November 9, 2020

The Lifesaving Society Alberta and Northwest Territories branch has developed this document to assist owners/owner's agents and personnel of aquatic facilities in navigating mask/face covering use and answer frequently asked questions. This guidance is based on current evidence and will be updated when new information becomes available. For more information on 'First Aid/Resuscitation and In-water Rescues' and 'PPE' recommendations, please see our guidance document; '[Re-Activating Aquatics in Alberta](#)'.



Why should I consider wearing a mask/face covering?

Reduces the chance of spreading respiratory droplets

- Reduces the chance of respiratory droplets contaminating other people or surfaces
- May prevent the temptation to touch your nose and mouth
- Because you cannot always maintain 2 metres distance from others

*Note: masks complement (not replace) other measures to prevent/slow the spread of COVID-19.

Why are some jurisdictions requiring masks/face coverings?

- To limit the spread of COVID-19

Should I wear a cloth mask/face covering when providing first aid?

- Surgical/medical masks are ideal for first aid versus cloth masks/face coverings

What is the effectiveness of a mask/face covering if it's wet?

- If the mask becomes wet, it then becomes less effective

Should masks/face covering be worn in outdoor aquatic facilities as well?

- Alberta and NWT governments encourage wearing masks/face coverings in public when it is difficult to maintain physical distancing of 2 metres at all times

What are the potential health effects of wearing a mask/face covering?

Biological Frame

- Proper use of masks will not have a significant biological adverse effect on the wearer's carbon dioxide or oxygen levels. The exception is in those with severe COPD and wearing tightly sealed N95 MASKS, and most people do not fit this specific population and have this specific mask.

Psychological Frame

- Some individuals may have anxiety or claustrophobia that may affect their mask-wearing comfort

Social Frame

- Masks may potentially affect communication with others, as it takes away a visual cue (mouth movement) and may affect speaking volume

What are the potential health implications of wearing a mask/face covering in a hot, humid environment?

- Cloth masks may trap virus particles after they become damp
- There are no published guidelines regarding health effects of masks and for the duration of use of masks, for the specific context of hot, humid environments

Considerations:

- Remember to replace masks if they become damp. If choosing to wear masks, they may need to be replaced more frequently in a hot and humid environment.
- The feeling of warmth while in a hot, humid environment, should be managed similarly despite whether a mask is worn or not; take a break, drink fluids, and sit/lay down
- Since masks (pocket masks and non-medical masks/face coverings) must remain dry to be effective, it is strongly recommended that PPE storage protocols be added to facility safety plan

What's the preferred number of layers for a mask/face covering?

- A minimum of 3 layers
- 4 layers is optimal

*Note: 2-3 layers should be tightly woven material fabric, such as high thread count cotton or linen (e.g. 600-thread count pillowcases and cotton sheets) . The 3rd or 4th layer (middle layer) should be a filter-type fabric, such as non-woven polypropylene fabric or a disposable filter inserted into a pocket on the mask

Can a face shield be used instead of a mask/face covering?

- A face shield typically does not provide adequate protection from the sides and cannot be used as an alternative to a non-medical mask when physical distancing cannot be achieved, unless it wraps around the face and underneath the chin
- Masks and face shields/eye protection can be used in combination to increase protection

What are some options for Leadership Instructors who are under a mandatory mask/face covering order while teaching dryland theory components of the course?

Physical considerations

- Use outdoor venues

Delivery considerations

- Videoconferencing
- Pre-recorded videos
- Online modules
- Digital resources (e.g. electronic slides, videos)
- Digital handouts

How long should the same mask/face covering be worn before replacing it?

- There are no published guidelines as to the duration of how long the same mask/face covering can be worn at a time
- If the mask becomes damp, soiled, or damaged, the mask should be replaced
- It is a good practice to wash re-usable masks at least daily, but there are no published guidelines on this

Should masks/face coverings be worn while exercising or while swimming in the pool?

- Masks should not be worn while performing high intensity exercises
- Masks should not be worn in the water or when sitting in whirlpools or steam saunas. In these environments, moisture will decrease the mask's effectiveness and present unnecessary safety risks.

***Note:** Face shields can be worn in the water by aquatic personnel as an additional safety measure. 2 metres distance should still be maintained at all times, except in the case of a rescue.

- Masks should be worn in the changerooms and removed prior to showering and entering the pool (if possible, utilize on-deck showers to minimize unmasked travel distance from the shower to pool)

***Note:** consider utilizing stanchions/barriers on deck to ensure patrons maintain 2 metres distance from Aquatics personnel at all times.

References:

1. Alberta Health Services (2020). Use of Masks during COVID-19. Retrieved from: <https://extranet.ahsnet.ca/teams/policydocuments/1/clp-ahs-use-of-masks-hcs-267.pdf>
2. Alberta Government (2020). COVID-19 Masks. Retrieved from: <https://www.alberta.ca/masks.aspx>
3. Government of Canada (2020). Non-medical masks and face coverings: Sew and no-sew instructions. Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks/sew-no-sew-instructions-non-medical-masks-face-coverings.html>
4. City of Calgary (2020). COVID-19 Face Coverings Bylaw. Retrieved from: <https://www.calgary.ca/csps/cema/covid19/safety/covid-19-city-of-calgary-mask-bylaw.html>
5. Alberta Health Services (2020). Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). Retrieved from: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/ppih/if-ppih-ncov-2019-staff-faq.pdf>
6. City of Edmonton (2020). Masks and Face Coverings Bylaw. Retrieved from: https://www.edmonton.ca/programs_services/emergency_preparedness/covid-19.aspx#stack135994
7. Government of Northwest Territories (2020). Non-medical masks. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.nt.ca/covid-19/en/services/prevention/non-medical-masks>
8. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2020). Considerations for wearing masks. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html#face-shields>
9. World Health Organization (2020). Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) Advice for the public: Mythbusters. Retrieved from: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters>
10. Government of Canada (2020). Non-medical masks and face coverings: About. Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks/about-non-medical-masks-face-coverings.html>
11. Alberta Health Services (2020). PPE Question of the Week – Common questions about continuous masking. Retrieved from: <https://youtu.be/WdWqyS2jTQE>
12. Alberta Government (2020). Guidance for wearing of non-medical face masks for the general public. Retrieved from: <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/989e490e-5959-4a20-bfc7-b126b08ea996/resource/523f7856-31f5-4af1-be62-3a48a0acad4c/download/covid-19-guidance-for-wearing-non-medical-masks.pdf>
13. National Library of Medicine (2020). Risks of N95 Face Mask Use in Subjects With COPD. Retrieved from: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31992666/>
14. National Library of Medicine (2020). Face mask-associated ocular irritation and dryness. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7362770/>
15. Alberta Health Services (2020). Evidence of harm from mask use for specific populations. Retrieved from: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/ppih/if-ppih-covid-19-sag-evidence-of-harm-from-mask-use-for-specific-populations.pdf>