

Renfrew County and District Health Unit

COVID-19 Directive for Masks/Face Coverings

Background

This directive for masks/face coverings will remind employers of their responsibilities under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act (EMCPA)* and related Regulations. It includes public health expectations per EMCPA and is written to continue to support a successful and safe implementation of the provincial [government's Framework for Reopening our Province](#). It is for any persons responsible for a business or organization that is permitted to open per *EMCPA Ontario Regulation 263/20 – Stage 2 Closures*, to highlight your responsibilities.

Increasing scientific evidence indicates that the widespread use of masks/face coverings by all persons decreases spread of respiratory droplets, and expert opinion supports the widespread use of face coverings to decrease transmission of COVID-19. Masks/face coverings are recommended because they:

- keep our respiratory droplets to ourselves and help to prevent the spread of the virus to others;
- provide a non-invasive, inexpensive way to reduce the spread of COVID-19; and
- act as a visual reminder to others to remain vigilant and stay physically distant from others.

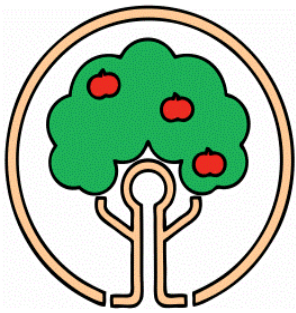
“Enclosed Public Space” means indoor public spaces accessed by the public.

These include the following, but are not limited to:

- restaurants, cafés, cafeterias, banquet halls;
- retail establishments and shopping malls;
- churches, mosques, synagogues, temples, or other places of worship;
- libraries, museums, art galleries, recreational facilities, bingo halls, community centres and halls, cinemas, theatres, concert venues, special event venues, convention centers, or other similar entertainment, cultural, or leisure facilities;
- sports facilities, sports clubs, gyms, yoga studios, dance studios, and stadiums;
- common areas of hotels, motels, or short-term rental premises such as lobbies, elevators, meeting rooms, rest rooms, laundry rooms, gyms, and kitchens;
- public and private transportation including taxis and rideshare services;
- common areas of premises under the control of a regulated health professional under the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991, S.O. 1991, c. 18, as amended*, such as waiting rooms;
- common areas of hospitals and independent health facilities such as lobbies, food courts and retail establishments;
- spas, hair salons, barbers, nail salons, and other personal service settings that are subject to health and safety protocols provided by the Province of Ontario during the provincial emergency;
- and municipal public spaces.

The following are NOT considered an “Enclosed Public Space”:

- Spaces subject to provincial and/or local public health guidance:



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- Schools under the *Education Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.2*, as amended
- Childcare centres and providers governed by the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014, S.O. 2014, c. 11*, as amended
- Day camps
- Offices not open to the public including professional offices where clients receive services by appointment only (e.g. lawyer, accountant).

Mask Definition

“**Mask**” means a cloth (non-medical) mask, medical mask or other face coverings (e.g. a bandana, scarf or cloth), for filtering respiratory droplets that securely covers the nose, mouth and chin and is in contact with the surrounding face without gapping.

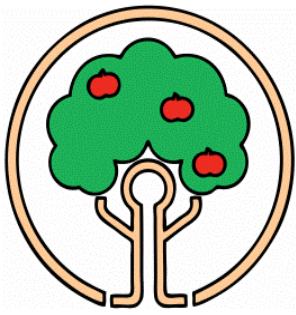
With the right to reopen businesses and public settings in our communities, comes the critical responsibility to do so in a *COVID-safe* way. Much of the responsibility and opportunity for a successful reopening in our region lies in your hands. The decisions you take as you reopen will determine the course of the pandemic in our area and the public health actions necessary to control spread.

A number of [workplace resources](#) are available on RCDHU's website including a number of sector specific guidelines.

Who is exempt from wearing a mask/face covering?

A person shall be **exempt** from wearing a face covering on the premises if:

1. The person is a child under the age of two years; or a child under the age of 5 years either chronologically or developmentally and he or she refuses to wear a face covering and cannot be persuaded to do so by their caregiver;
2. The person is incapacitated and unable to remove their mask/face covering without assistance under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* or who have protections under the *Ontario Human Rights Code, R.S.O 1990, c.H.19*, as amended;
3. Wearing a mask/face covering would inhibit the person's ability to breathe in any way;
4. For any other medical reason, the person cannot safely wear a mask/face covering such as, but not limited to, respiratory disease, cognitive difficulties or difficulties in hearing or processing information. **No medical documentation is required for a medical exemption, and operators should take a person's word in good faith.**
5. For any religious reason, the person cannot wear a mask/face covering, or cannot cover the face.



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6. A person who is employed by or is an agent of the operator of an enclosed public space and:
 - Is in an area of the premises that is not designated for public access or,
 - Is within or behind a physical barrier (e.g., plexiglass)

What are my responsibilities?

As a business or organization that is permitted to open per EMCPA *Ontario Regulation 263/20 – Stage 2 Closures* your responsibilities for **general compliance** per provincial legislation include:

4. (1) The person responsible for a business or organization that is open shall ensure that the business or organization operates in accordance with all applicable laws, including the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and the regulations made under it.

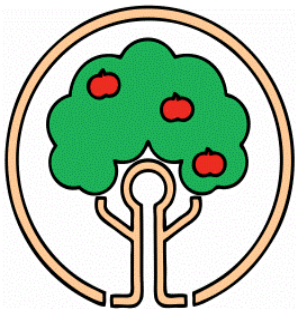
(2) The person responsible for a business or organization that is open shall operate the business or organization in **compliance** with the advice, recommendations and **instructions of public health officials**, including any advice, recommendations or instructions on physical distancing, cleaning or disinfecting.

(3) The person responsible for a business that is open to the public, or an organization responsible for a facility that is open to the public, shall ensure that the place of business or facility is operated to enable members of the public in the place of business or facility to, to the fullest extent possible, **maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from other persons.** (Ontario Regulation 263/20).

Directive from RCDHU Medical Officer of Health Regarding Enclosed Public Spaces

The following are instructions, pursuant to O. Reg 263/20 s.4(2) (or as current), to all operators responsible for businesses or organizations within Renfrew County and District Health Unit's service area:

1. To the fullest extent possible, ensure effective measures are in place to maintain physical distancing amongst all employees and clients.
2. Unless the nature of work requires the use of a medical mask, to the fullest extent possible, ensure all individuals wear a mask/face covering (for example, a homemade cloth mask, bandana, or scarf).
3. Implement screening practices for employees and members of the public, including requiring those who are ill to stay home and be advised to be tested for COVID-19.
4. Promote excellent hygiene practices including hand hygiene, and cough and sneeze etiquette (for details refer to the drop-down menu titled *How can you protect yourself and your family?* On [RCDHU's website](#)).



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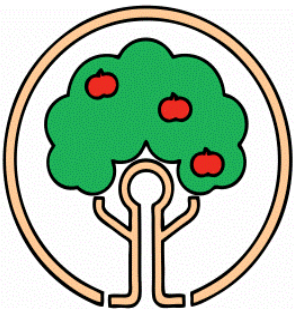
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Operator Definition

“**Operator**” means the person who controls, governs, directs, or is responsible for the activity carried on within the “Enclosed Public Space” and includes the person who is actually in charge at any particular time.

Duty of Operator

1. Every operator of an enclosed public space shall have a policy in place to educate persons when entering the premises of the commercial establishment or remaining in the premises if the said person is not wearing a mask/face covering. Best efforts shall be made to educate persons about wearing a mask/face covering. The mask/face covering **should be worn inside the premises at all times**, unless it is reasonably required to temporarily remove the mask/face covering for services provided by the establishment.
2. The policy should be enacted and enforced in “good faith” and should be used to educate people on mask/face covering use in premises where physical distancing can be a challenge.
3. Ensure the availability of alcohol-based hand rub at all entrances and exits for the use of all persons entering or exiting the premises.
4. Post appropriate visible signage indicating that masks/face coverings are required inside the premises. Each public entrance to the premises should post prominent and clearly visible signage. Sample signage can be found on the [RCDHU website](#).
5. Ensure that all employees are aware of the policy and are trained on your establishment's expectations.
6. No person shall be required to provide proof of any of the exemptions listed above, in the “Who is exempt from wearing a mask/face covering” section.
7. The policy shall:
 - Exempt the persons listed above in the “Who is exempt from wearing a mask/face covering” section from the obligation of wearing a mask/face covering.
 - Ensure that all persons working at the establishment are trained in the requirements of the policy.
 - Require that employees and agents wear a mask/face covering when working in the public areas of the premises unless the employee or agent is within or behind a physical barrier.
 - Require that employees and agents provide a verbal reminder to any customer entering the premises without a mask/face covering that the customer should be wearing a mask/ face covering.
 - Require, for customers in a premise removing their mask/face covering for extended periods of time, a verbal reminder to that customer of the requirement to wear a mask/face covering under these instructions.



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- Permit the temporary removal of a mask/face covering where necessary for the purpose of:
 - Receiving services; or
 - While actively engaging in an athletic or fitness activity including water-based activities and dining.
8. Support a non-judgemental approach for those not wearing a mask/face covering. Kindness is important as some people may not be able to wear a mask/face covering.

Additional Fact Sheets & Posters

RCDHU FAQ- [Directive for Masks and Face Coverings](#)

- Includes frequently asked questions about the directive for mandatory masks and face coverings while in enclosed public spaces.

RCDHU FAQ- [Masks and Face Coverings](#)

- Includes frequently asked questions about masks and face coverings to be used while in enclosed public spaces.

RCDHU Tool – [COVID-19 Employee Screening Tool](#)

- Tool for employees to use before starting a shift, to help limit the spread of COVID-19.

RCDHU Fact Sheet – [Guidance for Retail Stores](#)

- COVID-19 information for retail stores, to assist with operations during the current pandemic.

RCDHU Poster – [COVID-19 Screening Poster for Retail Entrances](#)

- Public entrance poster displaying COVID-19 signs and symptoms, to help limit the possible spread of COVID-19.

RCDHU Poster – [Do's and Don'ts of Using Non-Medical Masks](#)

- Poster with tips on what should and what should not happen while wearing a mask or face covering.

RCDHU Signage – [ATTENTION: Please Wear a Mask or Face Covering in this Facility](#)

- A notice sign, which can be used to remind the public to wear a mask before entering.