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.

Respirators, medical masks and non-medical masks can all be used in the community.
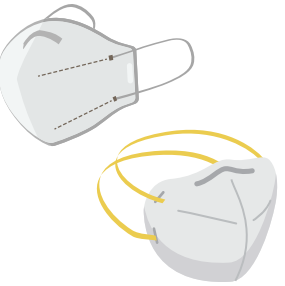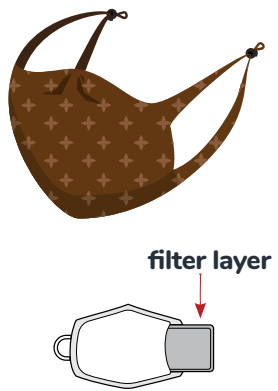
When deciding what type of mask to wear, choose the best quality and best fitting mask or respirator that's available to you.

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.

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
Respirators	Commercially available. Available in a variety of sizes, including smaller sizes that could be used 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 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-####**. 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.**
Medical Mask (Procedure or Surgical Mask)	Commercially available. Available in adult and smaller sizes that could be used for children.	Construction materials may vary but must meet established filtration standards. Typically single use 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.
Non-Medical Mask filter layer	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

ID 11-32-01 / DATE 2022.02.21

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