



Universal Masking Policy

CATEGORY:	WCFHT HEALTH & SAFETY	POLICY NO.: 009
SUBJECT:	UNIVERSAL MASKING POLICY	PAGE(S): 3
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Intent

Given the widespread community transmission of COVID-19, the West Champlain Family Health Team (WCFHT) remains committed to providing high-quality, compassionate care while ensuring the safety of our workforce and our patients. For that reason, WCFHT requires **all patients, providers, staff and visitors**, to wear a face covering or mask to help slow the spread of COVID-19, unless otherwise specified by way of a formal mask exemption provided by a registered physician or nurse practitioner in line with the [Ontario Disability Act](#). Although masks can reduce the release of respiratory droplets into the air when someone speaks, coughs or sneezes (including asymptomatic carriers), they are not to be relied on solely to prevent COVID-19 transmission. Physical distancing, respiratory etiquette, hand hygiene and keeping one's hands away from the face remains the best way to avoid contracting any viral or bacterial infection.

Guidelines

All employees, guests, and visitors of WCFHT must wear appropriate face masks upon entering the building. All masks must comply with the requirements under the Public Health Agency of Ontario, and must completely cover the nose, mouth and chin of the wearer without gaping. In the event a patient, provider or visitors mask does not meet these requirements, they will be given a surgical mask. If a patient is wearing any of the following, they will be asked to switch to a surgical mask:

- Vented mask
- Bandana
- Buff
- Face Shield

Employer Responsibilities

West Champlain Family Health Team will provide appropriate masks to employees, guests and support persons and will post signs at all entrances informing members of the public about requirements, in addition to any other safety measures.

West Champlain Family Health Team will train all employees on proper procedures for wearing masks, and inform employees of company procedure for customer interactions.

West Champlain Family Health Team will:

- Provide one-time re-usable masks to patients who arrive without one;
- Make available to employees and the public alcohol-based hand sanitizer in the recommended concentration (at least 70%);
- **Not** provide employees, patients, or support persons with mask exemption letters
- Offer a copy of this policy to customers who request it, along with information about any applicable act, regulation, bylaw, or order if requested;
- Provide information about the importance of wearing a mask or the science on the use of masks to patients or employees who request it;
- Explain to patients any applicable fines they or the organization may be subject to for noncompliance; and
- Deny entry to any employee, patient or third party who becomes aggressive about this requirement.

Employee Responsibilities

Employees must wear masks when providing care for patients or in any area that is accessible to the public, including publicly accessible washrooms.

Employees are not required to wear masks in the following areas:

- In their personal office space
- While eating or drinking

Mask Use

Re-usable non-medical masks should *not*:

- be shared with others
- impair vision or interfere with tasks
- be placed on children under the age of 2 years
- be made of plastic or other non-breathable materials
- be secured with tape or other inappropriate materials
- be made exclusively of materials that easily fall apart, such as tissues
- be placed on anyone unable to remove them without assistance or anyone who has trouble breathing

Reusable non-medical masks *must*:

- fit snugly against your face and cover both nose and mouth.
- have multiple layers of fabric.
- be washed and dried after each use.

Surgical/Procedure mask must:

- be secured with ties or ear loops.
- cover both nose and mouth.

- be clean.

Non-compliance

Patients who present at the clinic without a mask or face covering and refuse to wear one may have their appointment rescheduled. Visitors who present at the clinic without a face mask or covering will be denied access to the premises.

These practices will be continually monitored and re-evaluated based on community transmission and the emergence of new variants.

References

- Public Health Agency of Canada: [Council of Chief Medical Officers of Health Communication: Use of Non-Medical Masks \(or Facial Coverings\) by the Public](#)
- Health Canada: [Non-Medical masks and face coverings: About](#)
- Public Health Ontario: [Universal Mask Use in Health Care Settings and Retirement Homes](#)
- The New England Journal of Medicine: [Universal Masking in Hospitals in the Covid-19 Era](#)
- UOHS PPE Guidelines COVID-19 (Apr 6, 2020)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [How to Protect Yourself & Others](#)
- Ontario Health: [Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) use during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

Resources

- Hamilton Health Sciences-The Container Method (Re-used Masks): <https://youtu.be/lrR8KIY9FMk>
- World Health Organization: Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Advice for the Public: [When and how to use masks](#)