

# Coronavirus (COVID-19)

May 18, 2021

## Choosing a Mask

The purpose of a mask is to reduce the risk of infecting others and, to some extent, to reduce the risk of contracting an infection from another person. A mask:

- Limits the quantity of droplets expelled by the person wearing it (to protect other people);
- Protects the skin and mucous membranes of the mouth and nose from exposure to droplets from another person (to protect the wearer).

## Wearing a procedural mask as a general preventative measure

Ideally, you should wear a medical procedural mask. Non-medical masks and face coverings are suitable for public places.

Please see the table below for details about these different masks.

Wearing a procedural mask is just one of the recommended health measures, together with physical distancing of 2 metres, hand washing and respiratory hygiene (e.g. coughing or sneezing into your elbow).

To learn how to use a mask properly, see the page [How to use a mask or a face covering](#).

## Wearing a procedural mask when isolating at home

If possible, try to wear a **medical procedural mask**.

For those who are unable to obtain a medical procedural mask, a **non-medical** mask is acceptable.

A final option could be to wear a face covering without an expiratory valve.

The type of mask worn by a person and their contacts is a factor considered by Public Health in assessing the risk of exposure to determine whether, and for how long, the person's contacts must be isolated.

## Summary table of mask types, features and accessibility

Mask type	Features	Accessibility
Medical procedural masks	<p>Medical procedural masks have undergone testing to certify their effectiveness.</p> <p>To certify the level of quality of a medical procedural mask, the package labelling must include the words <i>medical mask</i> or <i>surgical mask</i> and must indicate that it meets the <b>ASTM F2100</b> or the <b>Type IIR EN 14683</b> standard. Some packaging marked “For non-medical use” may also certify the mask’s quality and compliance with the same standards.</p> <p>Certain masks with a transparent window may also be medical procedural masks.</p> <p>It is impossible to distinguish medical procedural masks from non-medical procedural masks (disposable masks) based only on their appearance.</p>	<p>Medical procedural masks are provided at health care facilities and schools, and should be available in all work environments for as long as required under the Workplace Guide to Sanitary Standards of the Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CNESST).</p> <p>These masks are available at most pharmacies and may be available at other retail stores. They can also be ordered online.</p>
Non-medical procedural masks	<p><b>Non-medical</b> procedural masks are single-use disposable masks that resemble medical procedural masks but without a declaration of compliance with a recognized standard (ASTM F2100 or Type IIR EN 14683). They are generally identified on the label as being for non-medical use, with no mention of standards.</p> <p>The effectiveness of these masks varies.</p>	<p>Non-medical procedural masks are available for purchase at pharmacies and other retail stores.</p> <p>They are generally less expensive than medical masks.</p>
Face coverings	<p>Face coverings are washable and reusable fabric masks (also called handcrafted masks) with ties or elastic ear loops that can be adjusted to fit the head.</p> <p>Their features are outlined on the site <a href="http://Quebec.ca">Quebec.ca</a>. The performance of face coverings is variable.</p>	<p>Face coverings may be manufactured by a company and sold on the Internet and at many types of retail stores. Prices vary. Some models of commercial face coverings feature a window.</p> <p>Face coverings may also be homemade (handcrafted masks). You can make your own face covering with a window. Logon to the site <a href="http://Quebec.ca">Quebec.ca</a> for instructions on how to make a face covering.</p>

To learn more, go to Québec.ca and look for the section [Wearing a mask or a face covering in public settings in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic](#).