Non-medical masks mandatory in indoor public places

When will masks be mandatory in indoor public places?
Starting at 12:01 a.m. on July 31, non-medical masks are mandatory in most indoor public places.

What are the places where masks will be mandatory?

Non-medical masks are mandatory in the following indoor public places:

- retail businesses
- shopping centres
- personal services businesses such as a hair and nail salons, spas, body art facilities, except during services that require removing a mask
- restaurants and bars, except while you are eating or drinking
- places of worship or faith gatherings
- places for cultural or entertainment services or activities such as movie theatres, concerts, and other performances
- places for sports and recreational activities such as a gym, pool, or indoor tennis facility, except during an activity where a mask cannot be worn
- places for events such as conferences and receptions
- municipal or provincial government locations offering services to the public
- common areas of tourist accommodations such as lobbies, elevators and hallways
- common areas of office buildings such as lobbies, elevators and hallways, but not private offices
- public areas of a university or college campus such as library, student union building or common areas of a faculty building, but not classrooms, labs, offices or residences
- train or bus stations, ferry terminals, and airports

Why are you doing this now? Why not at the beginning of the pandemic?
The evidence on non-medical masks has evolved through the pandemic, and our public health direction has evolved along with it. We have learned that they non-medical masks are effective, in combination with other core personal public health measures, to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Before a second wave of arrives, we need to make mask wearing needs to be a habit for Nova Scotians.

This is a very big change for businesses and workplaces. How is government helping them transition?
We are we are looking at ways to make sure people are able to access a mask regardless of their situation. We are also working on resources to help owners of affected public places to communicate that masks are mandatory in their spaces.

What about people who can't afford a mask or who forget theirs?
Many masks are very affordable, but we are looking at ways to make sure people are able to access a mask regardless of their situation.

How will this be enforced? Are there fines for not wearing a mask?
We are taking a cooperative and positive approach to mandatory masking rather than an enforcement approach. We have confidence that the vast majority of Nova Scotians will do the right thing and wear one. People should also be aware that businesses have the right to refuse them entry or refuse to serve

them if they don't follow the rules, always with allowances for the small number of people with valid reasons for not wearing a mask.

What happens if someone refuses to put on a mask or takes it off once they go inside? Can they be refused service or kicked out?
Businesses, workplaces, and other owners public places can develop their own policies and procedures. They can choose to refuse entry or service to people who are not following the rules.

Does every single office worker need to wear a mask? What if you're alone in your office with the door closed? What if your cubicle is 2 metres aware from the next one?
In an office building, masks are required in the common areas such as the lobby, elevators and hallways. Once you enter a private business's space, masks are not mandatory under the public health order. A private business may set its own policies for mask use.

Masks are mandatory in parts of offices where municipal or provincial government services are offered to the public. Municipalities and provincial departments may set their own policies for mask use in other parts of these offices.

Are masks mandatory in lobbies, elevators and hallways of apartment and condo buildings?
No, you don't need to wear a mask in common areas of apartment or condo buildings.

What are common areas of university or college campuses where masks are required?
Masks are required in common areas that the public has access to like the library, student union building, and common areas of a faculty building. They are not required in classrooms, labs, offices, or residences.

How can you wear a mask if you're having a meal or a drink in a restaurant or bar?
You can remove your mask to eat and drink. At any other time in a restaurant, bar or other indoor public place where food is served, you must wear a mask – for example, waiting to be seated, going to the bathroom, and getting ready to leave.

Do you need to wear a mask on a restaurant patio or at an outdoor eating establishment?
No, but you need to wear a mask if you have to pass through an indoor section of restaurant to reach the outdoor section.

Do you need to wear a mask at an indoor church or community supper?
Yes, you could remove your mask to eat, but otherwise must keep it on while you are in this place.

Do you have to wear a mask if you're involved in a court proceeding?
Masks are not required in a courtroom but are required in common areas outside the actual courtroom.

Isn't it unsafe to wear a mask if you're getting your heart rate up at the gym or during a sports practice?
If you're at an indoor public place and you're doing a physical activity where a mask cannot be worn, you can remove your mask for the duration of the activity, but you must wear it at all other times in the facility.

Doesn't that mean you could remove your mask for just about any indoor sport or any physical activity at the gym?

There are all kinds of physical activities that you can do while wearing a mask and some where you cannot. People need to use common sense.

How can you wear a mask in a pool? Wouldn't that be unsafe? If you can take it off to go in the pool, where you do you put it?
You are not required to wear a mask in the pool, but you must wear it at all other times in the facility. Managing how this is done is up to the facility.

With the barber and cosmetology sector plans, clients can remove their masks for a beard trim or a facial. Will those services continue with mask removed? Or will these services no longer be allowed?
People can remove their masks to get these services. This is addressed in the reopening plans for these types of businesses.

Do you have to wear a mask through an entire performance or movie or bingo? What about eating snacks at the movies?
Yes, you must keep your mask on at these venues, but you can remove it while you are eating or drinking.

When a person is presenting at a conference, they are typically on a stage or at the front of the room with more than 2 metres distance from the audience. Do they have to wear a mask?
Yes, the mask is still required.

Does everyone at a wedding have to wear a mask? Including the bride and groom? What about for their wedding photos?
Masks can be temporarily removed for ceremonial reasons such a bride and groom during their marriage ceremony or wedding photos.

If you're only interacting with your family or close social group at a gathering or in a public place, can you remove your mask?
You must keep your mask on because when there are other people around, it can be difficult to ensure physical distancing between your group and others.

If you're trying on clothes in a fitting room in a store, do you have to wear a mask? What if it comes off when you're changing?
You must wear your mask in the fitting room. If it comes off, put it back on.

If you are trying on glasses frames, do you have to wear a mask? Wouldn't the elastics around your ears get in the way of getting the right fit?
You must wear your mask. Optometrists have a plan for operating safely that addresses this situation.

How do you receive communion at church if you have to wear a mask? Can you take it off for that?
Masks can be temporarily removed for ceremonial reasons such as communion.

Can a business ask you to remove your mask for identification purposes?
Yes, businesses are allowed to ask and people are allowed to comply by momentarily removing their mask.

Can you take your mask off in a government office to get your drivers license? What about a photography business to get a passport photo taken?

Yes, a government office/photography business will instruct you when it is safe and appropriate to remove your mask in order to obtain a photo for identification purposes. Physical distancing must be maintained while the photo is being taken.

What if the environment is noisy and you can't make yourself heard without taking off your mask?
You must wear your mask. If the environment is noisy, you can move to a quieter location to make yourself heard.

If you are with people who, for various reasons, need to see your mouth moving while you speak, do you have to wear a mask?
If you are in one of the indoor public places listed in the public health order, you must wear your mask. There are window model masks available for purchase and also instructions on how to make one here: https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/wearing-a-face-covering-in-public-settings-in-the-context-of-the-covid-19-pandemic/

Do children have to wear masks?
Children under two are exempt, as well children aged two to four when their parent or caregiver cannot get them to wear a mask. Parents and caregivers are encouraged to help their children become comfortable with wearing a mask.

Does this change the requirements you announced for schools?
This announcement does not change the Back to School Plan. Masks are not generally required within the public school classroom setting. High school students who go to different classrooms throughout the day need to wear masks in hallways. Some staff and students may choose to wear a mask at other times. Non-medical masks are required for children and bus drivers on public transportation including school buses.

Are masks required in daycares and day camps?
Children are not required to wear a mask in a child care setting, although some families may choose for their child to wear a mask. Masks are not required at day camps where physical distancing can be maintained between cohorts. However, some staff and children may choose to bring and wear one.

What are medical reasons for not wearing a mask?
There are very few valid medical reasons to not wear a mask. The Canadian Thoracic Society states that there is no evidence that wearing a mask worsens a chronic lung condition such as asthma or COPD.

For some people with chronic breathing conditions or mental health conditions, wearing a mask can create anxiety. However, there are ways to overcome anxiety such as practicing wearing a mask for short periods of time at home.

There are also some people with cognitive or developmental disabilities who are unable to wear a mask.

Some people say wearing a mask can make you sick, like inhaling too much carbon dioxide or not getting enough oxygen. Is there any truth to that?
That is absolutely false. Other than children under two and people with a valid medical reason for not wearing a mask, there is no health hazard associated with wearing one. Medical professionals and others wear masks all day, every day. There is no reason why the majority of Nova Scotians can't wear one for shorter periods of time.

Can you get a document to show proving that you have a medical reason for not wearing a mask?
We will not issue or ask for a medical certificate so please do not go to your doctor's office asking for one. Please do not look for reasons to not wear a mask.

Please be aware of a fake document that is circulating that suggests it is proof from public health officials that the bearer cannot wear a mask. No public health agency has authorized this document.

What constitutes a non-medical mask? Could anything that covers the nose and mouth be accepted?
We encourage people to use a traditional non-medical mask. There are many local suppliers making and selling them, and while prices vary, some are quite economical. You can also make one with a bandana or similar piece of cloth folded in at least three layers of fabric. The Public Health Agency of Canada offers instructions: 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

How do you properly wear a non-medical mask?
People should learn how to put on and take off a mask safely. Do not touch your mask when you are wearing it. Learn more here: https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/covid-19-safely-use-non-medical-mask-face-covering.html

What do you do with your mask while you're not wearing it?
After wearing your mask, inspect it for tears or holes. If it's damaged, put it in the garbage – please do not litter. When your reusable mask becomes damp or dirty, wash it with hot, soapy water and let it dry completely before wearing it again. You can include a cloth mask with other laundry. Store your mask in a clean place until you need to wear it again.

Can you wear a face shield in place of a non-medical mask?
No, for the purposes of this new rule, a face shield cannot be worn instead of a non-medical mask. This is because a face shield protects the wearer's eyes but it does not protect other people if the wearer coughs or sneezes. A face shield and mask can be worn together, but most Nova Scotians are not going to be in situations that warrant wearing both.

If you're wearing a mask, does that mean you don't have worry about other public health measures?
No, masks need to be used as part of the package of personal protective measures: stay home if you feel unwell, wash or sanitize your hands often, use proper cough and sneeze etiquette, physically distance as much as possible, avoid touching your face, mouth, nose and eyes, limit the number of people you get together with, and clean high-touch surfaces and objects frequently.

If I'm required to wear a mask in the workplace, who pays for it?
When an employer is requiring employees to wear a mask as a result of an order by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, the employer is responsible to provide the equipment.

Who do you complain to if you see people not following this rule?
People should not assume that a person is breaking the rules when they don't know the facts of a situation. If you feel it's important, you can take the issue to the owner of the public place. If the issue is not resolved, they can call the Safety Division at the Department of Labour and Advanced Education.

Who does an employee complain to if customers or other employees aren't following the rule?
An employee should bring the issue to his or her OHS committee if there is one, or to their employer. If

the issue is not resolved, they can call the Safety Division at the Department of Labour and Advanced Education.