

ISC-AB Guidance on Masks during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Masks

Wearing a mask is one way to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Masks are tools that complement – not replace other measures such as:

- staying home if you are sick or test positive for COVID-19;
- physical distancing (staying apart at least 2 metres from people from outside your household)
- hand hygiene (washing hands with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer)
- covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your elbow (i.e. good respiratory etiquette); and
- avoiding touching your face with unwashed hands.

Types of Masks

Different types of masks are available for public use.

Non-medical masks, medical masks and respirators can all be used in the community.

Proper fit and proper use are key factors in effectiveness. It is important to check that the mask fits snugly over your nose, mouth, and chin.

Masks should be kept in place while wearing them. Falling off is a sign of poor fit.

Masks should be removed as infrequently as possible.

Non-Medical masks (e.g. homemade or commercially available cloth/fabric masks)

The effectiveness of non-medical masks in preventing the spread of COVID-19 can vary based on many factors. It depends on material, construction, fit and proper use.

Some non-medical masks can help prevent the spread of COVID-19 similarly to medical masks if they:

- fit well – see [How to Make Your Mask Fit Properly](#)
- have multiple layers, including at least 2 layers of breathable tightly woven fabric, such as cotton and
- have an effective middle filter layer
- Do not use masks that have exhalation valves. They do **not** help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

While non-medical masks can help prevent the spread of COVID-19, medical masks and respirators provide better protection if used and sized properly.

Masks worn in health care facilities are required to be approved medical masks or respirators.



Medical masks (surgical/procedural masks)

- Some disposable non-medical masks may look like medical masks but don't meet regulatory standards.
- Construction materials may vary but must meet established filtration 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:
 - o particle and bacterial filtration
 - o breathability
 - o fluid resistance
 - o flammability of materials

There are no recognized standards in Canada for transparent medical masks.

Respirators

- Construction materials may vary but must meet filtration standards for respirators.
- The design allows for a better fit than a medical mask.
- A respirator worn in the community doesn't need fit testing. Guidance on the use of non-fit tested respirators can be found in the document [Non-Fit Tested Respirators](#). **A respirator worn at a work site for occupational health and safety reasons, including at health care facilities, requires fit testing.**
- Make sure that your respirator is approved by Health Canada.
 - o NIOSH N95 respirators with an approval number stamped on the device, represented as TC-84A-####.
 - o 95PFE products or CSA certified CA-N95 and CA-N99 type respirators as marked according to the CSA Z94.4.1 standard.
 - o KN95 respirators that meet standard GB 2626-2019.
 - o KF94 respirators that meet standard KMOEL-2017-64.
 - o FFP2 respirators that meet standard EN 149-2001.

Additional information on the different types of masks can be found in the document [COVID-19 mask use: Types of masks and respirators](#).

PPE Access

Alberta Health Services remains the primary source for ordering PPE for staff working in Indigenous health care facilities and isolation centres in First Nations communities. Continue ordering health related PPE by completing and forwarding the AHS PPE order form to CPSMOperations.EOC@ahs.ca. A copy of the AHS order form can be found [here](#). If you experience any issues ordering health related PPE, please email sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca.

Indigenous communities and organizations can also get non-health related PPE from the following agencies:

1. Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA). AEMA currently has two streams of PPE available:
 - Excess/Expiring PPE Expanded Portal: This is a portal where AEMA offers PPE that has reached 75% of its lifecycle. PPE available from this portal **is free**, to ensure that PPE is not wasted. It can be reached here: <https://xnet.gov.ab.ca/ppe/other-order/>. Currently on this site there is ATSM Level 3 surgical masks as well as KN95 masks.

- Main PPE Portal: <https://xnet.gov.ab.ca/ppe/>. Items available include hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, thermometers, face shields, gloves (Nitrile), gowns, masks (Procedural, KN95-Non Medical, N95-Non Medical). It is important to note that the costs noted plus shipping is charged at cost.
2. Public Services and Procurement Canada’s Essential Services Contingency Reserve (ESCR)
 - [Essential Services Contingency Reserve](#) is offering PPE items such as hand sanitizer, gloves (Nitrile), masks (non-medical, KN95 respirators), face shields, safety goggles, disposable coveralls, and disinfection products at **no cost** to Indigenous communities and organizations. For more information on eligibility and application process, visit the [ESCR web page](#).
 3. Private Purchase of PPE Supplies

Connect to PPE suppliers using the websites below. The government is not responsible for products or prices offered on these sites.

- [Rapid Response Platform Canada](#)
- [ATB Nexus](#)
- [Federal Supply Hub](#)

Alberta-based businesses that manufacture PPE can find out how to help at [Alberta Bits and Pieces](#).

Available Funding

1. Public Health Needs Funding

The essential workers of a Nation are able to access personal protective equipment (PPE) including masks through health needs funding. Examples of essential services and functions can be found at the following Public Safety Canada website: <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/ntnl-scr/crtcl-nfrstrctr/esf-sfe-en.aspx>

In addition, in the rare event that both Alberta Health Services and Indigenous Services Canada (Emergency PPE stockpile) are unable to provide masks, health needs funding can be requested to purchase supplies from a third party vendor.
2. Indigenous Community Support Fund

Funding for masks and PPE for the members-at-large are accessible through the ICSF (Indigenous Community Support Funding) stream only.

Additional guidance on masks can be found on the COVID-19 Alberta One Health Portal: <https://www.onehealth.ca/ab/ABCovid-19>

Questions regarding this guidance can be emailed to: sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca

References:

Government of Canada - [COVID-19 mask use: Advice for community settings](#)
Government of Alberta – [Masks for the General Public](#)