

## **Mandatory Masks - FAQ**

### **What is New Brunswick's new guidance on masks?**

Masks are now mandatory in all indoor public spaces in New Brunswick.

Public places include:

- retail businesses and shopping centres
- personal service businesses like hair salons, barber shops, spas, etc. (except during services that require removing a mask)
- restaurants and bars (except while eating or drinking)
- places of worship and faith gatherings
- places for cultural or entertainment activities (movie theatres, theatre performances, dance recitals, festival, concerts, etc)
- places for sports and recreational activities, including gyms, yoga studios, pools, etc. (except during physical activity)
- municipal and provincial government locations that offer services to the public
- common areas such as lobbies, elevators and hallways

### **Why is New Brunswick making masks mandatory in public spaces?**

When worn properly and used along with other public health measures like frequent hand washing, proper cough/sneeze etiquette and physical distancing, masks are effective in limiting the spread of COVID-19.

### **Are masks now required on public transit?**

Yes. Public transit systems must require mask use with one metre distancing. In addition, a reserved section with two metre spacing or barriers should be made available to accommodate individuals who are exempted from wearing a mask.

### **If physical distancing of two metres can be maintained in public spaces, are masks still required?**

Yes. While physical distancing of two metres is still required, masks will add an additional layer of protection in indoor spaces. This applies to all indoor public venues including places of worship, theatres, concerts, etc.

### **Who is exempt from wearing a face mask?**

Some people are not able to wear masks for various reasons. It's important to remember that these reasons may not always be visible to others. New Brunswickers should always treat each other with kindness, respect and understanding.

Examples of people not required to wear a mask are below:

- Children under the age of two;
- People with a medical condition, including a mental health disorder, that prevents them from wearing a mask;
- Situations that include a person who is deaf or hard of hearing who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expressions to communicate;
- Performer or officiant who is performing activities that require vocalization (like talking or singing) at a faith gathering, wedding, funeral, social event, or arts and culture event;
- People who are receiving medical treatment or receiving a service, that requires it to be removed. In these cases, they may remove their mask for the duration of the treatment or service only;
- As per WorkSafeNB's guidance, face masks do not have to be worn where physical barriers are in place that protect people from potential exposure (e.g. plexiglass barrier). Workers for whom wearing a face mask would introduce a risk to the workers' health and safety related to their work environment may use a face shield as a substitute to the face covering. More information is available [here](#).

It is even more important that people exempted from wearing a mask practice physical distancing of staying two metres away from others, wash or sanitize hands frequently and get tested if unwell, even with mild symptoms. It is also recommended that people exempted from wearing a mask avoid, as much as possible, crowded places and plan to do errands during off-peak times when stores are less crowded, or have items delivered if possible.

**Are masks required for the public, even in situations where barriers, such as plexiglass, are present? What about when two meters of distance can be maintained?**

Yes. Masks are considered an additional form of protection in indoor spaces.

**Will the mandatory mask requirement change the protocol for schools and early learning and childcare facilities?**

No. While New Brunswick remains in yellow, the current guidance for masks in schools and early learning and childcare facilities will remain in effect.

**Are masks required in churches/places of worship?**

Yes. People attending churches/places of worship will be required to wear a mask. Maintaining two metres of physical distancing also continues to apply. Performers or officiants who are performing activities that require vocalization like talking or singing at a faith gathering, wedding, funeral, social event, etc. are exempt from wearing a mask but they should stay four metres away from others during their performance. Parishioners must wear masks while singing. It should be noted that singing during a pandemic is a high-risk activity. The chance of expelling drops of liquid that could contain COVID-19 increases during singing, shouting, cheering or playing wind instruments. Having a group of people singing increases the number of these small droplets. Additional risk factors include longer durations of more than 30 minutes and group singing within indoor settings.

### **Can people with asthma, lung disease or other respiratory conditions wear a face mask?**

Yes. Individuals with asthma or other respiratory conditions can wear a face mask. The Canadian Lung Association, the Canadian Thoracic Society, and Asthma Canada all support public health recommendations on mask use as protection against COVID-19.

### **How should businesses handle the implementation of this new mask policy?**

While there is no one-size fits all approach, businesses should consider how they will communicate this new policy to the public. An option could be to post signage outlining the mask requirement and providing additional options for those unable to wear a mask including online or phone ordering and delivery or contactless pick-up options.

During the first few weeks, retailers could consider providing complimentary masks for anyone who has forgotten theirs or provide one for a nominal fee.

It's important to note that some people cannot wear masks for medical reasons and that sometimes these reasons are not visible. Business cannot request proof that an individual is exempt from wearing a mask. New Brunswickers are encouraged to be kind and show compassion and understanding.

### **Can businesses prevent someone from entering if they don't wear a mask?**

Businesses can refuse entry if the requirement is not followed. However, it's important to note that some people cannot wear masks for medical reasons and that sometimes these reasons are not visible. Business cannot request proof that an individual is exempt from wearing a mask. New Brunswickers are encouraged to be kind and show compassion and understanding.

### **Will masks have to be worn in workplaces where there is no interaction with the public?**

Masks must be worn in common areas of workplaces such as hallways and elevators.

### **How will this new mask policy be enforced?**

New Brunswickers understand that masks work to prevent the spread of disease. We will rely on New Brunswickers to make good decisions to protect themselves and others from COVID-19.

However, fines will be imposed on businesses who overtly allow patrons to disregard the mask policy.

### **What kind of masks are acceptable?**

Wear a non-medical mask composed of disposable paper or cloth. Disposable masks should be put in the garbage when soiled. Medical masks, such as N95, are not necessary for the public and should be reserved for health-care workers. Masks should have two or more layers of washable, breathable fabric such as cotton. Homemade masks should be made as per the Public Health Agency of Canada's (PHAC) instructions located at:

<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>

### **What is the proper way to wear a mask?**

Masks should cover your nose and mouth and fit snugly against the sides of your face and under your chin.

Do not wear your mask around your neck, on your forehead, under your nose, on your chin, dangling from one ear or on your arm. A small plastic bag is a safe place to store your mask when not wearing it.

### **Can I wear a mask that has a vent or valves?**

No. Vents or valves in masks allow virus particles to escape and are not recommended during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Are there any tips for those who wear glasses and find it hard to wear a mask?**

Masks that fit closely over your nose or one that has a nose wire tend to limit fogging. Several styles may need to be tried to find the best fit. In addition, lens treatments are available to limit fogging.

### **Is it okay to wear a face shield / gaiter / scarf / bandana instead of a mask?**

No. These items should not be worn instead of a face mask to protect against COVID-19. They are not as effective at preventing the transmission of viruses because they do not effectively contain the spray of respiratory droplets like saliva and mucus.

### **When are face shields appropriate to be used?**

A face shield is intended to be used with a mask and is mainly used for eye protection for the person wearing it. Health-care workers wear face shields, along with masks, and other protective equipment, to protect both themselves and patients from becoming infected with COVID-19.

Workers for whom wearing a face mask would introduce a risk to the workers' health and safety related to their work environment may use a face shield as a substitute to the face covering. More information is available [here](#).

Individuals with a medical exemption can wear a face shield, however it is not a replacement for a mask. Other additional accommodations, barriers, or two metre distancing is still required.

### **How does this policy impact operational plans for sports and physical activities?**

Previously developed operational plans continue to apply. Masks are not required to be worn by individuals while participating in an organized sport or physical activity, however they must be worn at all other times, including between practices and games, etc.

Spectators must always wear masks. If some sports can incorporate wearing a mask into play, this will be encouraged. Participants are not required to wear masks while on the team bench during game play, but if feasible, this should be enabled. Masks will be required in dressing rooms, combined with one metre minimum physical distancing between individuals, and on team benches for players not in rotation.

### **What are my options if I have difficulty or feel that I am unable to wear a mask?**

If a person has challenges wearing a mask, it is recommended that they try different styles until they find the one most comfortable for them. Masks can loop behind the ears or tie behind the head and are available in various shapes including pleated and form fitting. Masks can be made of different fabric such as cotton or disposable paper. Devices such as headbands and hats with buttons, or clips to hook elastics on are also available to take pressure off the ears.

For mild anxiety or claustrophobia, individuals can consult with their health-care providers for coping techniques.

### **Additional Resources:**

- Use of a Community Mask to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19:  
<https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/h-s/pdf/MASK.pdf>
- Tips for wearing a Face mask with Asthma:  
<https://asthma.ca/asthma-and-covid-19-coronavirus/>
- Canadian Lung Association:  
<https://www.lung.ca/lung-health/lung-disease/covid-19-coronavirus/faqs>
- Canadian Thoracic Society:  
<https://cts-sct.ca/covid-19/use-of-face-masks-by-the-public/>
- How to Combat Mask Anxiety:  
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/erasing-stigma/202006/how-combat-mask-anxiety>