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 of multi-unit apartment or condo buildings (lobbies, elevators, stairwells, common rooms)
• common areas such as lobbies, elevators and hallways
• hospitals and healthcare facilities

Any space that is open to the public, at any time, is considered a public space, at all times.

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. Masks are required on public transit. In instances where people are seated and every person continuously wears a mask, physical distancing of one metre is acceptable. 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.

Note, in instances where people are seated and every person continuously wears a mask, physical distancing of one metre is acceptable.
If everyone is required to wear a mask in public places, does that mean we don’t need to worry about distancing any more?

Two metres of physical distancing is still required. In instances where people are seated and every person continuously wears a mask, physical distancing of one metre is acceptable.

Are there people who can’t wear 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 who may be unable to wear a mask:

- Children under the age of two;
- People with a medical condition, including a mental health disorder, that prevents them from wearing a mask;
- Anyone in 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 only for the duration of the treatment or service only (masks must be worn at all other times in hospital and healthcare facilities)
- 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.

Note: between the ages of two and five, children may be able to wear a mask if supervised. This will depend on their ability to tolerate it as well as put it on and take it off.

It is even more important that people who are unable to wear 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 who are unable to wear 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 and must be worn despite the presence of physical barriers and/or physical distancing.
Will the mandatory mask requirement change the protocol for schools and early learning and childcare facilities?

No. While New Brunswick remains in the Yellow level of recovery, 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 at all times, as well as maintain physical distance. In instances where people are seated, and every person continuously wears a mask, physical distancing of one metre is acceptable.

Officiants and participants (e.g. clergy, readers, marrying couple, singers) 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 reading or recital. 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. We encourage everyone to be kind and show compassion and understanding. Consider alternative ways of providing your services to people who cannot wear masks. Online shopping, contact-free pickup, and delivery.

Can businesses prevent me from entering if I don’t wear a mask?

Businesses can refuse entry to any individual who is not following requirements. Owners and operators have the right to apply tighter restrictions to ensure the safety of their staff and customers. We are encouraging businesses to remember that some people cannot wear masks and to provide alternative ways of providing service (like online shopping or contactless pickup).
Will masks have to be worn in workplaces where there is no interaction with the public?

In workplaces where the public is not admitted, employees do not need to wear a mask where physical distancing can be maintained. 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.

What kind of masks are preferred?

Recently the Public Health Agency of Canada’s (PHAC) updated their guidelines and are recommending that community face masks be made of three layers. Two layers of tightly woven fabric such as cotton or linen and include a third (middle) layer of a filter-type fabric, such as: non-woven polypropylene fabric, which is washable or a disposable filter. 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

It is not necessary to throw out your two-layer masks. Consider 3-layers masks when making or purchasing new masks as the three layers provides added protection.

Medical masks, such as N95, are not necessary for the public and should be reserved for healthcare workers. You may wear a non-medical mask composed of disposable paper or cloth. Disposable masks should be put in the garbage when soiled.

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 unable to wear a mask 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.
Are there any changes to masking measures in the Orange level or recovery?

In Orange level, masks are required in outdoor public spaces in addition to indoor public spaces. Outdoor public places include any location where people gather and physical distancing cannot be guaranteed, such as sidewalks, public walking trails, parks, markets, and playgrounds.

At school, students in grades K-8 will need to wear their masks while at their desks when actively participating in discussions. When doing work silently at their desks, masks can be removed. K-8 students will also need to wear masks in common areas such as hallways, even when in their own bubbles. High school students must wear masks at all times in school. All students in K-12 will wear a mask at all times outside at school and on buses unless they otherwise have a medical exemption. School personnel need to wear masks at all times when at school (including outside) except when eating.

In the Orange level of recovery, why are masks required outdoors?

In the Orange level, when case numbers are higher and the risk of community transmission is elevated, masks are required in outdoor public spaces as an added measure of protection. While the risk of getting COVID-19 in an outdoor setting is low, evidence supports putting extra precautions in place when risk levels are elevated. Outdoor public places include any location where people gather and physical distancing cannot be guaranteed, such as sidewalks, public walking trails, parks, markets, and playgrounds.

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/
- New Brunswick’s Recovery Plan (including the phases of recovery): https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/corporate/promo/covid-19/recovery.html