

Tip Sheet for Licensed Home Child Care

Using Medical Masks, Eye Protection and Face Coverings (non-medical or cloth masks)

What are the expectations for using masks, eye protection and face coverings (non-medical or cloth masks) in licensed home child care?

As of September 1, 2020, home child care agencies must ensure that the following guidelines, which are set out in the Ministry's [Operational Guidance During COVID-19 Outbreak: Child Care Reopening document](#) are followed in order to reduce the risk of exposure and transmission of COVID-19:

Expectations for home child care providers and other adults providing care to children:

- All providers are required to wear medical masks and eye protection (i.e., face shield or goggles) while providing care to children.

Expectations for children:

- All children in grades 4 and above are required to wear a face covering (non-medical or cloth mask) while at the home child care premises.
- All younger school-aged children (Kindergarten to grade 3) are encouraged but not required to wear a face covering (non-medical or cloth mask) while at the home child care premises.
- Masks or any other type of face covering are not recommended for children under two years of age.

Please also note that best practices to protect yourself and others from spreading COVID-19 includes frequent cleaning of surfaces, hand-washing, increasing ventilation and time spent outdoors and practicing physical distancing, in addition to the use of PPE. Guidance related to all of these measures can be found in the [Operational Guidance During COVID-19 Outbreak: Child Care Reopening document](#) as well as the [provincial COVID-19 website](#) and should be followed.

When is it optional for home child care providers to wear a mask and eye protection and for children or others regularly in the home to wear face coverings?

For the safety of themselves and those around them, home child care providers should use a medical mask and eye protection as much as possible and when putting on and taking off a mask and/or eye protection should follow appropriate health and safety practices like washing hands. Please see [a helpful video](#) on how to properly put on and take off masks and eye protection.

Home child care agencies can set out reasonable exceptions related to the requirement for home child care providers to wear medical masks and eye protection, and for children to wear non-medical or cloth masks. Home child care agencies should document any exceptions on the use of masks and eye protection (e.g. within their COVID-19 policy). Note that while an agency may choose to set out in their policy that a doctor's note be acquired for an exception related to a medical condition it is not a requirement of the ministry.

Consider the following situations as examples of when wearing a mask and/or eye protection is optional:

- Children and the home child care provider are playing indoors and everyone is at least two (2) metres apart from one another.

- The home child care provider is preparing an activity for the children more than two metres away from them while the children play independently (e.g. reading books on the couch, building with blocks on the floor).
- A home child care provider is outside with the children and everyone is 2 metres apart.
- A home child care provider has a medical condition that causes difficulty breathing with a mask on (e.g. severe asthma).
- A resource consultant is working one on one with a child who is deaf or hard of hearing and who relies on lipreading for communication.
- A family member is in a separate room or space (e.g. sleeping, eating, watching television, working or studying) where no children are present or is at least 2 metres away from the children receiving care.
- A child who is exempt from having to wear a mask during the school day because of a medical condition would not be expected to wear a mask in an after-school program. The provider consults the local public health unit, ensures all parents are aware and documents the exception.

When considering reasonable exceptions to the requirement to wearing medical masks and eye protection, keep in mind that their use is for the safety of home child care providers and the children in their care. This is very important for providers working with young children who may not be wearing face coverings (i.e. under the age of two).

While home child care agencies may consider exceptions to wearing both masks and eye protection when a distance of at least 2 metres can be maintained, home child care providers should consider the activities they are engaged in, and the likelihood that they would need to suddenly interact closely with a child or assist a child during the activity before making an exception. Given the likelihood of spontaneous and frequent need for close interactions in a child care setting, it may not be realistic to first put on a mask and eye protection properly (i.e. without contamination) in order to then quickly respond to a child's needs. Please see the guidance on putting on PPE included below.

It is important to consider different types of PPE that can be used before making an exception. If a medical mask and eye protection cannot be tolerated, there may be a different type of mask or eye protection that can be better tolerated that could be used. For example, some masks are more comfortable and offer more breathability for someone with severe asthma. Or, accommodations could be made such as the use of masks with clear panels to maintain protection for a resource consultant working with a child who relies on lipreading for communication.

Positive Learning Environments for Children

Home child care agencies and providers are encouraged to review [Building on How Does Learning Happen?](#), which provides pedagogical approaches to re-opening child care and early years settings. This resource shares ideas, reflective questions and lessons learned from emergency child care to help provide healthy physical, social and emotional spaces for children and their families as they gradually re-open.

More Information

For more information on the use of masks, eye protection and PPE, the following resources are also available:

- The Ministry's [Operational Guidance Document](#) and the [2020-21 Before and After School Kindergarten to Grade 6 Policies and Guidelines document](#).

- The Ontario Together Portal, which has a Workplace PPE Supplier Directory available to child care licensees and that lists Ontario businesses that provide PPE (<https://covid-19.ontario.ca/workplace-ppe-supplier-directory>).
- The [provincial COVID-19 website](#) or the [Public Health Ontario fact sheet](#) on non-medical masks and [putting on PPE](#).
- The College of Early Childhood Educators' resource called [PPE: a shield to germs but open to making connections](#).