

BC Public Service Mask Order for All Areas of the Province

Updated December 29, 2021

The Provincial Health Officer (PHO) issued an updated [order for face coverings](#) on December 3, 2021. The order requires masks or other appropriate face coverings to be worn in indoor public spaces in all areas of the province. The PHO also recently updated the age for wearing a mask. Anyone five years and over must wear a mask or face covering in indoor public spaces. The order has no expiry date.

Due to the Omicron variant the Public Service requires all staff to wear a mask in all areas of the workplace when two metres of physical distancing can not be maintained from another person and there is not a physical barrier in place to prevent the transmission of COVID-19. This includes but is not limited to:

- elevators
- lobbies
- hallways and corridors
- stairwells
- staff or public bathrooms
- kitchens, lunch rooms and break rooms
- meeting rooms
- file rooms
- photo copier and mail room areas
- Leading Workplace Strategies space, etc.

Staff do not have to wear a mask while seated at their workstation (office, cubical or LWS space) if they are 2 metres from others or they are separated by a barrier such as plexiglass or a cubicle divider.

Mask use applies to all workplaces in any area of the province.

Mask use in Staff Areas of the Workplace FAQs

Do staff have to wear a mask in a cubicle or office?

Once a worker is at their desk, they are not required to wear a mask if two metres of physical distance can be maintained from other staff working nearby, or if there is a barrier between desks which are less than two metres apart.

Do staff have to wear a mask in open work areas or Leading Workplace Strategies (LWS) areas?

Workplaces should have completed the COVID-19 Workplace Assessment Tool for any open areas or LWS areas. Staff are not required to wear a mask while working at a desk in these areas if two metres of distance can be maintained from other staff working at desks nearby, or if there is a barrier. Staff must wear a mask while transiting through open work areas or LWS areas until they are situated at their desk or workstation.

Do staff have to wear a mask in meeting and board rooms?

Staff must wear a mask while transiting to a meeting or board room and during the meeting. Reinstatement occupancy limits for meeting rooms from your workplace's COVID-19 Workplace Assessment Tool.

When do staff have to wear a mask in lunch or break rooms?

Staff must wear a mask while transiting to a lunch or break room, while preparing food or beverages, and while cleaning up. Staff are not required to wear masks when seated and eating. Physical distancing must be maintained in the lunch or break room when masks are not being worn, and occupancy limits must be followed.

What about areas like photocopy or file rooms?

Staff must wear a mask while transiting to these areas and wear a mask while working in these areas.

Client service at a counter or wicket

Staff do not need to wear masks if they are separated from the client by a barrier *and* they are 2 meters from other staff. Where employees are not two metres apart from each other in a client service area, they must be separated by a barrier or *both* must wear a mask.

Types of Masks

The effectiveness of masks in preventing the spread of COVID-19 may vary based on many factors. It depends on the material and construction of the mask, the fit on a wearer's face and proper use protocols. Keys to effective mask use:

Construction

- ✓ at least 2 layers of breathable tightly woven fabric (such as cotton) **and** have an effective middle filter layer

Fit

- ✓ snug on the face with good skin contact all around the mask perimeter especially on the cheeks and nose
- ✓ you should feel the mask collapse a bit when you inhale
- ✓ minimal air escaping around the edges when you breath out

Proper use

- ✓ wear it over your nose and mouth at all times
- ✓ if the mask has a metal nosepiece form it over the bridge of your nose to reduce air escaping
- ✓ change masks when they become damp
- ✓ do not place your mask on common surfaces like counters and tables

Updating Communicable Disease Prevention Plans

Workplaces must use the Communicable Disease Prevention Plan update on [MyHR](#) to review and update their plans to increase protection measures during this time of high community transmission. The Communicable Disease Prevention Plan update includes information on masking, meetings, meeting rooms and other protocols that must be implemented in all BC Public Service workplaces.

Ensure all staff are notified and trained in the new COVID-19 safety protocols for the workplace and circulate and post your updated Communicable Disease Prevention Plan.

If you require assistance with your Communicable Disease Prevention Plan or any other aspect of your workplace health and safety protocols, please contact a workplace health and safety specialist using [AskMyHR](#).