

# Mask information for BC Public Service workplaces

BC Public Service Agency | November 6, 2023

## Public service mask requirements

As of November 2023 staff are not required to wear a mask in the workplace, except as directed by health care settings or where required by an exposure control plan.

Mask wearing is recommended when staff are providing client service field work indoors and distancing or a barrier is not in place. For example, when attending a client's residence. Mask wearing is recommended when staff are transporting clients or the public in a vehicle, and if possible, mask wearing is recommended for all occupants over five years old.

Staff may choose to wear a mask at any time in any area of the workplace.

## Safe work procedures

These Safe Work Procedures apply to all staff who are using non-rated procedure masks and the use of ASTM rated "surgical or procedure" masks.

Note: This safe work procedure does not cover the use of respirators like N95s, KN95s, half-face elastomeric air-purifying respirators that require fit testing. For assistance with the use of that equipment or similar, please submit an AskMyHR

request.

Non-ASTM rated masks should be constructed of at least 3 layers with a middle filtering layer. Where ASTM rated mask are required, they must be used. Non-rated masks are not a substitute for ASTM rated masks.

## **Appropriate use of procedure masks**

When worn properly, a person wearing a procedure mask will reduce the spread of their own infectious respiratory droplets. An ASTM rated mask will help protect the wearer against transmission of the COVID virus.

Masks should:

- Fit securely to the head or ear loops
- Be changed as soon as possible if damp or dirty
- Be comfortable and not require frequent adjustment
- Be large enough to cover the nose and mouth completely and comfortably without gaping

Masks should not:

- Impair vision or interfere with tasks
- Be secured with tape or other inappropriate materials
- Be placed on anyone unable to remove them without assistance or anyone who has trouble breathing

## Safe work practices

The following safe work practices are a set of methods or “Dos and Do nots” on how to use procedure masks:

Do:

- Make sure a mask fits well and doesn't gape at the sides
- Wash hands before putting on and taking off a mask
- Avoid touching a face mask during use
- Wear masks only for a short time
- Change a mask by only touching the straps or ear-loops
- Change a mask as soon as it gets damp or soiled
- Place a used mask directly into a paper bag (for re-use) or a plastic lined garbage bin (for disposal)

Do not:

- Don't share a mask with other people
- Don't wear a mask that is damp or soiled
- Don't re-use a mask that is damp, soiled, torn, or crumpled
- Don't touch the face while wearing a mask
- Don't move or adjust a mask while it is being worn
- Don't place a used procedure mask on any work surface, common area or equipment, as there is a potential risk of infection for others

## Putting on and taking off a mask

### How to put on a procedure mask

#### Step 1:

- Wash or sanitize your hands before putting on a mask

#### Step 2:

- Pull at the top and bottom to open the pleats or chamber
- With coloured or printed side facing out, and the nose wire at the top, put your fingers through the ear loops and position the mask over your nose and mouth
- Place the ear loops securely around the ears



#### Step 3:

- Pull the mask from the top and bottom to fully open the folds of the mask and adjust the mask around the face



#### Step 4:

- Gently re-form (do not pinch) the nose wire (if equipped) over the bridge of the nose and make any final adjustment



## How to remove a procedure mask (ear-loop style)

1. Wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water is not available, use hand sanitizer with a minimum 60 percent alcohol base
2. Ensure that you are within easy reach of a brown paper bag or plastic lined garbage bin
3. Reach behind your ears and grasp both ear loops
4. Remove the mask outward from your face by handling only the ear loops
5. Place the mask into the paper bag or lined garbage bin
6. Wash or sanitize your hands

## Are you performing other work activities?

Anyone performing other work activities can review workplace health and safety information or contact a BC Public Service Agency Occupational Safety Specialist via [Careers & MyHR](#). Refer to the [MyHR BC Public Service Agency](#) website for further information related to workplace health and well-being.