

# Mandatory Use of Face Coverings to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19

**Category:** Operations

**Approval:** PVP

**Responsibility:** COVID-19 Control and Education Working Group

**Date initially approved:** August 1, 2020

**Date of last revision:** N/A

## **Definitions:**

A **face covering** means a non-medical mask or other face covering such as a bandana, a scarf or cloth (including for religious purposes) that covers the nose, mouth and chin providing a barrier that limits community transmission of respiratory illness/ COVID-19 from the wearer to others in close proximity. Face shields (clear plastic coverings to protect the eyes and possibly the lower part of the face) are not an acceptable alternative to a face covering for the purpose of these instructions (as they are less supported by research regarding their effectiveness). However, they may be used by individuals in addition to a face covering for added protection; in addition, anyone exempted in this instruction from using a face covering may, but are not required to, use a face shield for added protection.

A **multi-person indoor space** is an indoor room or open area where more than one person may congregate. Examples include, but are not limited to, classrooms, labs, open concept office areas, lounge or study areas in hallways, common rooms, cafeterias, open library spaces, atria and meeting or seminar rooms.

A **person/people** means any student, staff or faculty employee, contractor or visitor, who enters Trent University property.

## **Purpose/Reason for Policy:**

Respiratory infections such as COVID-19 may spread through respiratory droplets from infected individuals through coughing, sneezing, and speaking. COVID-19 transmission can occur even when someone is not showing symptoms. As the University increases on-campus activities during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to implement policies and safety measures to prevent the spread of the virus and to protect the health and wellbeing of employees, students, and community members. While wearing face coverings is an important step in reducing the risk of transmission, it must be accompanied by other measures including, physical distancing, respiratory etiquette and good hand hygiene.

## **Scope of this Policy:**

All indoor spaces on Trent University property, including spaces rented and operated by tenants, and all Trent owned or operated vehicles. All outdoor spaces on Trent property where physical distancing cannot be maintained, such as bus stops or narrow pathways.

### **Policy Statement:**

All persons who enter or remain in the indoor spaces of Trent University, or in outdoor spaces where physical distancing cannot be achieved, are required to wear a face covering that covers the nose, mouth, and chin. The face covering must be worn inside Trent University buildings at all times, with the following exceptions:

- when eating or drinking in a physically distanced setting;
- in a single person indoor space such as an office, study carrel or residence room;
- when a manager or instructor responsible for a multi-person indoor space, such as a lab, classroom or common area, determines that physical distancing can be maintained and/or, physical barriers are sufficient;
- if wearing a mask would constitute a safety hazard;
- when required to receive medical services.

A person shall be exempt from wearing a face covering at Trent University if:

- The person is a child under the age of two years; or is a child under the age of five years either chronologically or developmentally and he or she refuses to wear a face covering and cannot be persuaded to do so by their caregiver;
- The person is incapacitated and unable to remove their face covering without assistance;
- Wearing a face covering would inhibit the person's ability to breathe such as, but not limited to, during athletic, fitness or physical activity or any activity that would preclude its use (such as swimming);
- For any other medical reason, the person cannot safely wear a face covering such as, but not limited to, respiratory disease, cognitive difficulties or difficulties in hearing or processing information.
- For any religious reason, the person cannot wear a face covering.

No person shall be required to provide proof of any of the exemptions set out in the policy.

Visible signage indicating that face coverings are required inside Trent University buildings will be posted at all entrances and exits. In addition:

- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer of 60% or more will be available at all entrances and exits of the establishment, for use by all persons entering or exiting.
- All employees, students and volunteers will receive training on the policy, learn how to respond to anyone who arrives without a face covering or removes their face covering while inside Trent University buildings, and will be instructed on where people are allowed to remove their face covering on campus.

### **Training requirements:**

- All employees/volunteers and students will complete mandatory COVID-19 prevention training, including training on [how to safely wear a mask](#). This includes:
  - Before putting on your face covering, wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
  - Secure the loops of the face covering around your ears. If your face covering has strings, tie them securely behind your head.
  - Cover your mouth and nose with the face covering and make sure there are no gaps between your face and the face covering.
  - Do not touch the front of the face covering while you wear it. Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if you accidentally touch your face covering.
  - Conduct hand washing and/or sanitizing prior to removing the face covering, and again once the face covering is removed.
  
- The training program will include instruction and messaging on how to respond to various circumstances:
  - Student, visitor or employee arrives without a face covering because they forgot or don't have one
  - Student, visitor or employee is exempt from wearing a face covering
  - Student, visitor or employee wants more information about the policy
  - Student, visitor or employee becomes aggressive about the new requirement
  - Student, visitor or employee wants information about the importance of wearing a face covering or the science on the use of face coverings
  - Student, visitor or employee asks about the availability of alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol concentration)
  - Student, visitor or employee removes the face covering for any other purpose other than eating or drinking, prior to exiting the premise
  
- Return to Campus plans will clearly outline areas within the department that employees should wear face coverings and where they can be safely removed.
  
- One reusable face covering will be issued to all employees and students attending campus, and masks will be available for sale in the Campus Store in Peterborough and in Durham, or people may choose to wear their own disposable or cloth face covering.
  
- Face coverings may be safely disposed of in any lined trash receptacle.

### **Responsibilities:**

**PVP and COVID-19 working groups** – developing and approving protocols and allocating resources to implement this policy.

**Facilities Management** – installing signs, hand sanitizers, plexiglass shields, and directional signage as necessary.

**Department heads/chairs** – developing Return to Campus plans that identify those areas where and when face coverings are required/not required and ensuring employees are informed. Identify the number of complimentary face coverings required for employees/volunteers returning to campus. Ensuring all employees complete the mandatory COVID-19 Employee education module.

**Managers, Instructors, Principal Investigators and Research Lab Managers** – before providing the option to remove face coverings in multi-person spaces, will ensure that physical distancing or other measures that help prevent virus transmission are in place.

**Student Affairs/Housing** – ensure all students complete mandatory COVID prevention training.

**All employees** – completing Employee training module and encouraging compliance in good faith with this policy by reminding those not in compliance with the requirement of the policy requirements. Students, visitors and employees are not to be refused access to Trent buildings for non-compliance, but are encouraged to wear a mask (and may be provided with a mask).

### **Contact Officer:**

VP HR

### **Date for Next Review:**

This policy will be reviewed every two months by the COVID Control and Education Working Group to ensure it remains consistent with direction from Public Health or the Government of Ontario.

### **Related Legislation, Policies, Procedures & Guidelines**

- a) Ontario Emergency Measures and Civil Protection Act Regulation 364/20
- b) Peterborough Public Health Section 22 Directive July 20, 2020
- c) Durham Region Public Health Section 22 Directive July 6, 2020

### **Resources:**

- [How to safely wear/clean a cloth mask or face covering](#)
- Video: [COVID-19: How to wear a non-medical mask or face covering properly](#)
- Video: [How to make your own face covering](#)
- Poster: [Wear a Face Covering](#) (Ministry of Health)
- Poster: [Stop Before Entering Poster](#)
- Poster: [6-steps for handwashing](#)
- Poster: [Hand sanitizing](#)

### **References**

Public Health Agency of Canada. (2020). Council of the Chief Medical Officers of Health Communication: Use of Non-Medical Masks (or Face Coverings) in Public. Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/news/2020/04/ccmoh-communication-use-of-non-medical-masks-or-facial-coverings-by-the-public.html>

American Academy of Pediatrics. (2020). Cloth Coverings for Children During COVID-19. Retrieved from: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Cloth-Face-Coverings-for-Children-During-COVID-19.aspx>

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