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Use of non-medical masks or face coverings in the Canadian transportation system

From: [Transport Canada](https://TransportCanada.ca)

Background

COVID-19 is a global public health challenge that has changed the daily lives of people around the world, and ensuring the safety and security of Canadians remains the Government of Canada's top priority.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the transportation industry in Canada has implemented a number of measures to provide greater physical distancing. This includes increased space between passengers and agents, limiting touch points (e.g., exchanges of cash or documentation, food and/or beverage services), and allowing passengers to remain in their vehicles on ferries.

Despite these measures, there are still points in a passenger's journey that prevent people from maintaining a physical distance of two metres, raising the potential for community spread of the virus. Some of these instances include physical screening at aviation security checkpoints, exchange of identity documents, and during the journey when passengers are given assistance (e.g., physical mobility assistance).

Non-medical mask or face covering

The Minister of Transport announced new measures requiring all air passengers to have a removable, non-medical mask or face covering to cover their mouth and nose during travel. Non-medical masks or face coverings should fit snugly but comfortably against the side of your face, be secured with ties or ear loops and cover your mouth and nose. It should be easy to put on and take off when necessary (e.g., identity verification check).

Wearing a non-medical mask or face covering over the mouth and nose can help reduce the inadvertent spread of COVID-19 through respiratory droplets spread by asymptomatic people. Wearing a non-medical mask or face covering has not been proven to protect the person wearing it; however, it is an important additional measure that all travellers can take to protect those around them, even if they have no symptoms. Passengers can meet these requirements by following the [information that Public Health Agency of Canada](#) has published on how to wear, and if necessary make at home, a non-medical mask or face covering.

It may not be possible for everyone to wear a face covering at all times during their travels, but travellers are strongly encouraged to do so whenever possible, and required to do so in the aviation environment, where operating constraints make it more challenging for physical distancing from others.

Children under two years of age and those with underlying medical conditions may not be able to wear a non-medical mask or face covering, and there are times when travellers will need to show their face for safety or security reasons such as during identity verification check before boarding a plane, or at Canada customs when entering the country.

Wearing a non-medical mask or face covering does not replace or diminish the need to continue with other public health measures, such as maintaining physical distancing where possible, and rigorous hand hygiene practices to help reduce everyone's exposure to the virus.

Transportation setting

A non-medical mask or face covering can be particularly useful when physical distancing is not possible in various transportation settings.

Due to their very different operational settings and environments, the times during which a traveller is called on to cover their mouth and nose with a non-medical mask or face covering will be different depending on the mode of transport.

Aviation

When travelling by air, travellers are encouraged to wear non-medical masks or face coverings whenever possible, but at a **minimum are required to cover their mouth and nose:**

- at **Canadian airport screening checkpoints**, where the screeners cannot always keep two metres of separation between themselves and the passenger;
- **during flight when they cannot physically distance from others**, or as directed by the airline employees; and
- **when directed to do so by a public health order or public health official.**

Passengers on all flights departing or arriving at Canadian airports will also be required to demonstrate they have the necessary non-medical mask or face covering during the boarding process otherwise they could be denied entry into the sterile area of the airport or denied boarding onto the aircraft.

Airlines are responsible for notifying passengers when purchasing their ticket at the counter or online, of the requirement to have non-medical masks or face coverings during the voyage, when physical distancing is not possible, to

avoid putting the safety of others at risk. It is the passenger's responsibility to have the appropriate face covering.

Marine

Ferry and essential passenger vessel operators across Canada have taken steps to ensure physical distancing is maintained at all times. However, there could be situations where physical distancing might not be fully possible (e.g., when passengers are not in their vehicles and moving about a vessel). In these instances, passengers could be required by operators to wear their non-medical mask or face covering over their mouth and nose. Passengers could also be denied boarding by operators who can act to maintain safety of their operations.

Transport Canada is issuing guidelines recommending that operators of ferries and essential passenger vessels, when feasible:

- Notify passengers when purchasing their ticket at the counter or online, of the requirement to have non-medical masks or face coverings during the voyage, when physical distancing is not possible, to avoid putting the safety of others at risk. It is the traveller's responsibility to have the appropriate non-medical mask or face covering.
- Provide public messaging to travellers about the need to have a non-medical mask or face covering to cover their mouth and nose, for use at times during their journey when they cannot maintain physical distance from others, and that passengers could be subject to denial of boarding should they fail to comply.

Rail

Passenger rail carriers such as VIA Rail have made arrangements on their trains to ensure physical distancing is maintained at all times. Building on these measures, Transport Canada is issuing guidance to ask passenger rail carriers to require travellers to wear a non-medical mask or face covering during their voyage when physical distancing cannot be maintained.

Transport Canada is issuing guidelines recommending that railway operators:

- Consider notifying passengers when purchasing their ticket at the counter or online, of the requirement to have non-medical masks or face coverings during the voyage, when physical distancing is not possible, to avoid putting the safety of others at risk.
- Verify prior to boarding, that passengers have a non-medical mask or face covering to cover their mouth and nose, for use at times during their journey when they cannot physically distance from others (e.g., when moving around other passengers or receiving service or assistance from railway company representatives).

Rail companies have the authority to make their own policies and implement them, in particular when it comes to safety of their operations, their employees and their passengers. They are authorized to deny boarding to ensure the safety of their operations.

Road

Motor carriers and bus operators have a number of measures in place to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. This includes, for example, physical distancing through rear-boarding of the buses, and barriers to separate the driver and passengers.

Building on these measures, in collaboration with provinces and territories, Transport Canada is recommending a number of voluntary measures to further reduce the risk of transmission. These voluntary measures apply to motor carriers and bus operators, and include that they:

- Consider notifying passengers when purchasing their pass/ticket at the counter or online that they should wear non-medical masks or face coverings for the entire duration of their travel, and to follow recommendations from Public Health officials (e.g. stay home, physical distancing, hand-washing);
- Remind passengers that they should consider wearing non-medical masks or face coverings to avoid putting the safety of others at risk.
- Where operationally feasible and appropriate, confirm with passengers prior to boarding that they are aware that wearing a non-medical mask or face covering can reduce the spread of infectious respiratory droplets.

If operationally feasible and appropriate, some motor carriers and transit operators may consider denying boarding to passengers who refuse to wear face coverings without a valid justification.

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