

# COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) Face Coverings

## Mandatory Use of Face Coverings in Enclosed Public Spaces and Businesses

July 30, 2020

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### Key Points

- On July 30, 2020, Southwestern Public Health issued a letter of instruction to businesses to implement mandatory face coverings in all enclosed public spaces in Oxford County, Elgin County, and the City of St. Thomas.
  - Businesses have a one-week grace period to prepare and train staff. All policies are required to be in place by 12:00 a.m. on August 6, 2020.
  - Face covering means a medical or non-medical mask, bandanna or scarf that covers the mouth and nose.
  - Face coverings are an effective way to protect the public and prevent the spread of COVID-19
  - The full letter of instruction can be found [here](#).
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### Guidance

On July 30, 2020, Southwestern Public Health issued a letter of instruction to businesses to implement mandatory face coverings in all enclosed public spaces in Oxford County, Elgin County and the City of St. Thomas. This applies to all commercial establishments, public transit and commercial transportation services (i.e. limousines, taxis, rideshare programs). Businesses have a one-week grace period (until August 6, 2020) to develop policies, update facilities where needed, and prepare and train staff.

Businesses and organizations are instructed to have two policies in-place.

1. The first is an **enclosed public space policy** to ensure face coverings are worn by any person who enters the establishment for the entire time they are on premises.
2. The second is a **policy for enclosed employee spaces** that are not accessed by the public. It must include public health interventions, such as physical distancing, face coverings when physical distancing is not possible, enhanced cleaning and disinfecting, staff screening, and requiring those who have symptoms to stay home and advising they be tested for COVID-19.

Enclosed public space means any indoor public space of business or organization accessed by the public, including all public transit or commercial transportation vehicles. A person means any customer,

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client, visitor, patron, volunteer, or employee who enters the space. Face coverings include medical or non-medical masks, or a bandanna, scarf or cloth that covers the mouth and nose. Face shields do not offer the same protection from respiratory droplets and therefore are not an acceptable form of face covering. Face coverings may be removed temporarily to access services (e.g. food services, nose piercing) where it is reasonable to do so.

Signage must also be posted to inform all patrons, customers, and clients that face coverings are required. For additional information, read the full letter of instruction available [here](#).

## Exemptions for Face Coverings

1. Children under two years of age; or children under the age of five years either chronologically or developmentally who refuse to wear a face covering and cannot be persuaded to do so by their caregiver
2. Persons who are unable to wear a face covering as a result of a medical condition
3. Where wearing a face covering would inhibit a person's breathing (such as during exercise)
4. Persons who cannot wear or remove a face covering without assistance, including those who are accommodated under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act or are protected under the Ontario Human Rights Code

Remember, some individuals cannot wear a face covering for medical reasons which are not always visible or apparent. For example, an exemption may be needed for those with lived trauma, individuals with mental health concerns, and individuals with sensory disorders. Do not require anyone to show proof of exemption. It is our hope that everyone takes responsibility to help contain COVID-19 and that no one makes a false exemption claim.

We are working with select community service providers to assist vulnerable individuals who may need support in obtaining face coverings.

## Compliance

Southwestern Public Health will be working with local municipalities to take an education-first approach to obtain compliance with this order. We will also work with local enforcement officers for any individuals or businesses that do not comply, which can carry a fine. Individuals can be fined between \$750-\$1000, up to a maximum of \$100,000 while corporations can be liable for a fine up to \$10,000,000 for each day or part of a day on which the offense occurs.

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Thank you for your anticipated support and understanding to comply with this important public health measure to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

## Additional Resources

[Video on how to put on and take off a face covering](#)  
[Toolkit for Workplaces – including Sample Policy Letter](#)  
[Signage – Face Covering Mandatory](#)  
[Resource – How to Properly Wear a Face Covering](#)  
[Universal Masking for Priority Populations](#)