

# Universal Masking Policy at UHN

## Information for patients and their Essential Care Partners

### What is a Universal Masking Policy?

Everyone must wear a medical mask while inside the hospital. This includes:

- patients coming to the hospital for appointments, tests or treatment (outpatients)
- patients staying in the hospital overnight (inpatients)
- patients getting care in the Emergency Department
- pre-approved Essential Care Partners (a person who is at the hospital to support a patient)
- contractors and delivery persons
- UHN staff

Exceptions may apply for patients with medical conditions that prevent them from wearing a mask. The exception must be approved by a UHN doctor or nurse practitioner.



## Why was this policy created?

COVID-19 can be spread by people who do not have any symptoms (called asymptomatic spread). This is why we are requiring everyone at UHN to wear a medical mask, even if they do not have any symptoms.

## What if I can't or don't want to wear a mask?

All outpatients and pre-approved Essential Care Partners **must** wear a mask while inside the hospital. Inpatients **must** wear a mask when leaving their room for any reason. This is to protect all patients, Essential Care Partners and staff in the hospital.

- **For patients with a medical condition that prevents them from wearing a mask:** Ask your UHN doctor or nurse practitioner for a mask exemption before coming to the hospital. You will get a Face Mask Exemption Form if your exemption is approved. Show the form to the entrance screeners when you arrive at the hospital and they will give you a face shield to wear instead of a mask.

Entrance screeners cannot give Face Mask Exemption Forms at the hospital doors.

- Essential Care Partners cannot ask for a face mask exemption at this time.

## Can I wear my own mask or face covering while in the hospital?

Entrance screening staff give you a medical mask when you arrive at the hospital. They will explain how to put it on properly.

For everyone's safety, you should wear this medical mask while in the hospital. KN95, N95, disposable and cloth face masks come in a range of qualities and there are counterfeit products on the market. Entrance screening staff are not able to check the quality of masks people wear to the hospital. Having everyone

wear a medical mask provided by the hospital is the best way to make sure everyone is protected.

- **If you are wearing a reusable mask or face covering when you arrive at the hospital:** Bring a plastic bag to store your reusable mask while at the hospital. Wash your reusable mask when you get home.
- **Do not** wear bandanas, neck gaiters or masks with exhale vents inside the hospital. They do not stop germs from spreading to others.

Entrance screening staff will give you 1 medical mask each day.

If you are staying at the hospital overnight, ask your health care team for a medical mask when you need one.

## How do I wear a medical mask?

- Your medical mask should always cover your nose, mouth and chin.
- The medical mask ear loops or ties should be attached properly.
- The medical mask must not have any tears, holes or vents. Ask your health care team for a new mask if your mask gets wet, dirty or torn while in the hospital.
- Avoid touching or adjusting your mask while you are wearing it.
- Clean your hands before and after putting on or taking off your mask.

For more information on how to wear a mask, read [Masking Dos and Don'ts](https://www.uhn.ca/PatientsFamilies/Health_Information/Health_Topics/Documents/Masking_Dos_Donts.pdf) (https://www.uhn.ca/PatientsFamilies/Health\_Information/Health\_Topics/Documents/Masking\_Dos\_Donts.pdf).

## **I'm staying in the hospital as an inpatient. When do I have to wear a mask?**

Inpatients must wear a medical mask when leaving their room for any reason, such as for medical tests or appointments. Keep the medical mask on at all times when outside your room.

When in your room, please wear a medical mask when:

- interacting with your health care team
- visiting with your Essential Care Partner
- you cannot stay 2 metres (6 feet) or more away from other patients sharing your room, such as when getting to the bathroom

Ask your health care team for a medical mask. Please **do not** use a mask from home.

## **I'm coming to the hospital as an outpatient or Essential Care Partner. When can I remove my mask?**

Keep your medical mask on at all times while inside the hospital.

- **If your health care team asks you to take it off during your appointment or treatment:** Clean your hands with hand sanitizer. Hold the ear loops or ties and remove your mask carefully. **Do not** touch your face or the front of the mask.
- Please wait until you leave the hospital to eat or drink. If you are not able to wait, please **do not** remove your mask in a clinic waiting room or inpatient room. You may only take your mask off to eat or drink if you are in an area where you are 2 metres (6 feet) or more from other people.

You may want to keep the medical mask on when leaving the hospital. The City of Toronto bylaws state you must wear a mask when taking public transit, using rideshare services or entering a building. Learn more about the [City of Toronto's bylaws](https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-what-you-should-do/covid-19-orders-directives-by-laws/) (https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-what-you-should-do/covid-19-orders-directives-by-laws/).

## **How do I safely remove my medical mask when I am outside of the hospital or at home?**

Remove your medical mask carefully to reduce your risk of infection.

1. Clean your hands using soap and water or hand sanitizer.
2. Hold the mask by the ear loops and pull the mask away from your face.  
**Do not** touch your face or the outside of the mask.
3. Put the medical mask in the garbage.
4. Clean your hands again.

See instructions on how to [Remove Your Mask Safely](https://www.uhn.ca/PatientsFamilies/Health_Information/Health_Topics/Documents/Remove_Your_Mask_Safely.pdf) (https://www.uhn.ca/PatientsFamilies/Health\_Information/Health\_Topics/Documents/Remove\_Your\_Mask\_Safely.pdf).

## **What else do I need to know before coming to UHN?**

UHN is limiting who can enter the hospital or visit on hospital property to lower the risk of spreading COVID-19 to patients and staff.

To learn more about what to expect when coming to UHN, see:

- [Limits on Who Can Enter UHN During the COVID-19 Pandemic](https://www.uhn.ca/PatientsFamilies/Health_Information/Health_Topics/Documents/Limits_On_Who_Can_Enter_UHN_During_COVID19.pdf) (https://www.uhn.ca/PatientsFamilies/Health\_Information/Health\_Topics/Documents/Limits\_On\_Who\_Can\_Enter\_UHN\_During\_COVID19.pdf)

- [What Essential Care Partners Need to Know Before Coming to UHN](https://www.uhn.ca/PatientsFamilies/Health_Information/Health_Topics/Documents/Essential_Care_Partners_Quick_Guide.pdf)  
([https://www.uhn.ca/PatientsFamilies/Health\\_Information/Health\\_Topics/Documents/Essential\\_Care\\_Partners\\_Quick\\_Guide.pdf](https://www.uhn.ca/PatientsFamilies/Health_Information/Health_Topics/Documents/Essential_Care_Partners_Quick_Guide.pdf))
- [UHN's COVID-19 information page](http://www.uhn.ca/COVID19) (<http://www.uhn.ca/COVID19>)

## **For more information**

Ask the entrance screening staff or your health care team if you have questions about wearing a medical mask at the hospital.

For more information about preventing the spread of COVID-19 call:

- Toronto Public Health Helpline at 416 338 7600
- Telehealth Ontario at 1 866 797 0000