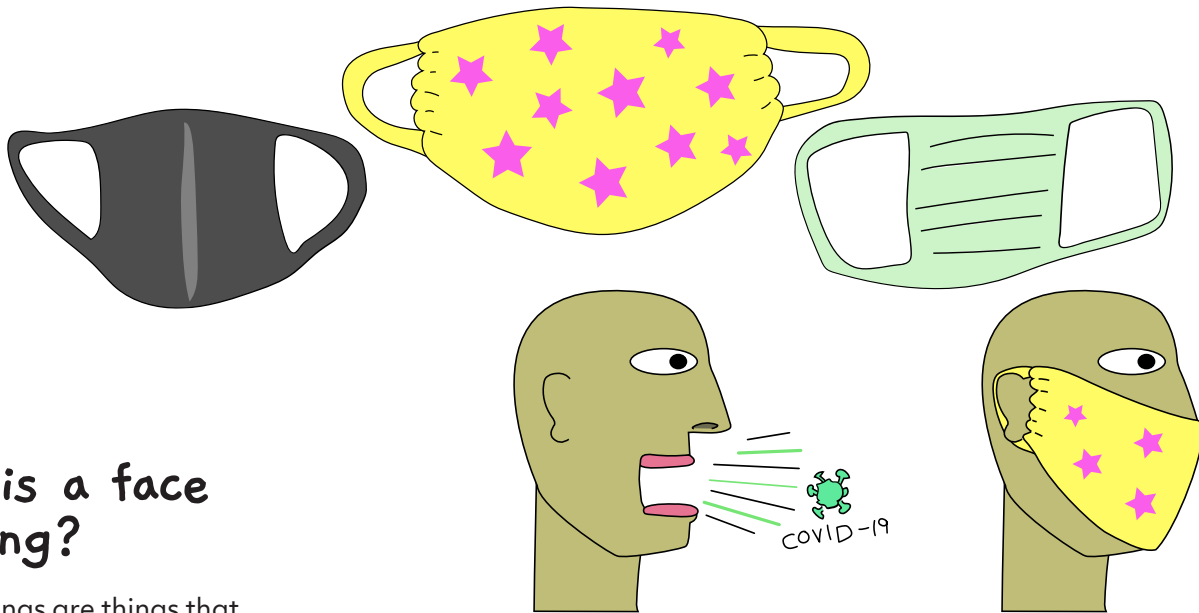Ontario Association of
Children's Aid Societies

Face Coverings, Cloth Masks and You

## What we know so far... January 2022

What is a face covering?

Face coverings are things that you wear to cover your mouth and nose to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 (and other viruses). To combat the Omicron variant, scientists now think that the best face coverings are respirators (N95s or KN95s) or surgical masks. Face shields, bandanas, cloth masks, and neck gaiters/balaclavas aren't as effective, so if you can, use a respirator or surgical mask.

Why should I wear one?

To protect you and the people around you! You need to wear a mask at schools, in stores, on public transport and most other places where you can't physically distance. Even though you might be vaccinated, wearing a mask is still really important to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

If you live in a group care setting, you could be at higher risk for getting COVID-19 so wearing a mask might be recommended for you and staff to wear inside to help keep you safe.
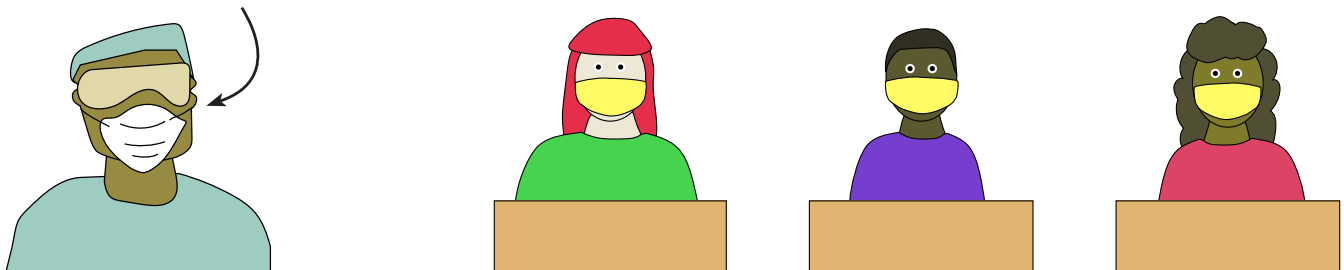
Who should not wear one?

- children under 2
- anyone who has trouble breathing
- anyone that can't remove the masks on their own

If that's you, talk to a caregiver to find out what you should do. If they aren't sure, they will ask for help from a doctor or Public Health.
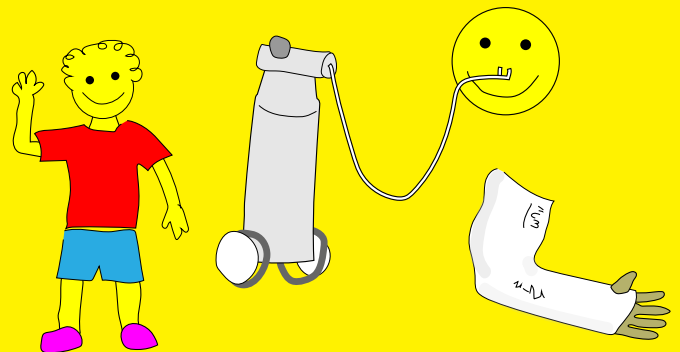
How do I put it on and take it off?

Always wash your hands before you put it on and after you take it off. This is really important!

Once you have it on, try not to touch it and don't take it off. It's more effective that way.

If you need to remove your mask, for example to eat or drink, don't forget to wash your hands first and try your best not to touch the front of your mask or your eyes, mouth or nose, and remove it by the ear pieces. Place the mask on a clean surface or in a container with the part that was on your mouth and nose facing up.
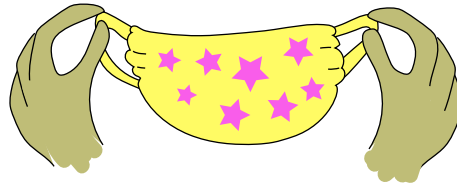
You will need a clean mask each time you go out so you might need more than one.

What else do I need to know?

It's important for the mask to fit properly to be effective. It should cover your mouth, nose, and chin and should fit snugly, but not so snugly that you can't breathe!

If you're using them, cloth masks can be washed with hot water and dried with the rest of your laundry and should be cleaned regularly, ideally after each time you use them. Don't share your face covering with anyone else. Throw used disposable masks in the garbage.

Wearing a mask does not give you superpowers!
It is still really important to wash your hands often, not touch your face, stay home when you are sick, and physically distance as much as possible, even if you are vaccinated.

6 feet / 2 metres
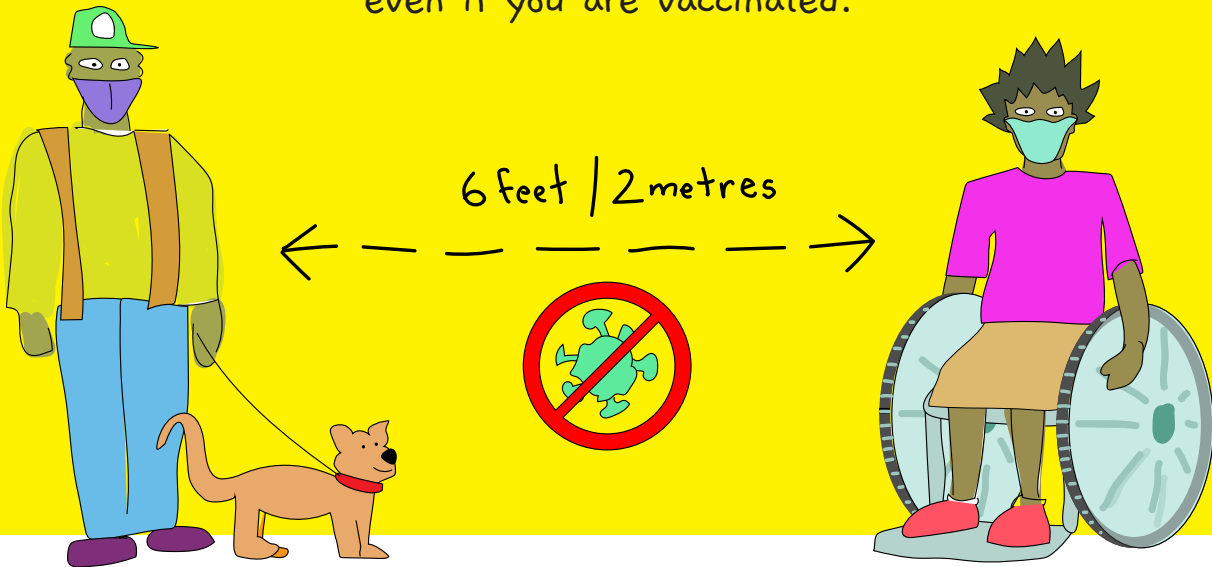
More info:

- Non-medical masks and face coverings: How to put on, remove and clean, Government of Canada
- Cloth Masks, Surgical Masks, or Double Masks: Which Are Safest?, Popular Mechanics
- Child friendly video to explain using masks (and other PPE), AboutKidsHealth
- Face Coverings and Face Masks, Ministry of Health