

It's Time to Tighten Our Masks!

Please – Stay - Home!

The third wave has hit, and our region is now also being submerged. This time, it's the much more contagious and deadly variant and unfortunately, we are giving it plenty of opportunities to invade. Evidence shows that most cases of COVID transmission are caused by airborne infection from people who do not even know they are infected. So, every time you go out, you could be spreading or inhaling the COVID virus. This makes your mask critically important when you do have to leave home. Masks can make a life-or-death difference to you and to those around you, so it is time to start paying more attention to what you wear and how you wear it. Working in the vaccine clinic recently, gave me the chance to see many of the common mask problems.

1 – Masks wear out. After a few months of wearing and washing, fabric breaks down and elastic stretches. If you can see light through your mask, or you can blow out a birthday candle wearing it, it is too thin and should be replaced. Lower quality and single-layer masks may not provide enough protection even when new.

2 – Masks keep slipping. If your mask does not stay in place, it is too loose. The easiest way to replace or shorten elastic is with a stapler. Other options include tying a knot in the elastic or using a cord lock from an old hood or drawstring. You can also use an unfolded paperclip to connect the ear loops behind your head.

#3 – Too many gaps. Densely woven 2–3-layer cotton masks and medical masks effectively filter the air passing through them. Unfortunately, this also slows down airflow and encourages more air to try to escape through any opening in or around the mask. Even small gaps can make your mask only half as effective. You should not be able to feel a gap between the edges of your mask and your face. The sides of your mask should be wide enough to lie along the flat sides of your face, and it should be long enough to sit flat under the chin. Nose wires are there to help seal the top of your mask, which also helps keep your glasses from fogging up. In a pinch, medical tape or even band-aids can be used to close up any obvious gaps before heading out.

#4 – Not keeping covered. Taking your mask off for any reason puts everyone at risk. Talking on your cell phone for 2 minutes without a mask can release thousands of infectious particles that linger in the air for hours. Letting your nose or chin hang out may seem only half as bad, but still puts you and others at high risk.

5 – Wearing a “mask alternative”. Face shields without a mask block 2% of COVID particles. A single-layer stretch neck gaiter or mask can increase airborne particles by breaking up larger droplets that usually fall to the ground. Bandanas and other loosely fitted face coverings have too many air leaks (see #3 above)

Stay Safe and Stay Home. If you absolutely need to go out, wear a proper mask and wear it properly. If you are at increased risk for any reason, consider wearing a medical mask under a well-fitting fabric one for extra protection.

For more information see - <https://www.pefht.ca/local-information.php>