

COVID-19 health and safety

Selecting and using face shields in non-health care settings

The most effective ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19 infection include having sick workers stay at home, physical distancing, barriers, masks, handwashing, and cleaning and disinfecting work areas. Employers should only use face shields to supplement other control measures. This document provides guidance on using face shields in non-health care settings. For health care settings, refer to the [BC Centre for Disease Control \(BCCDC\)](#).

How COVID-19 spreads

COVID-19 is an infectious disease that mainly spreads between humans through close contact with an infected person and their respiratory droplets. Respiratory droplets are generated by breathing, speaking, coughing, and sneezing. Your exposure risk is greatest when you have prolonged close contact with an infected person.

The virus can also spread if you touch a contaminated surface and then touch your eyes, mouth, or nose. A surface can become contaminated if droplets land on it or if someone touches it with contaminated hands. However, transmission through surfaces is not as common as respiratory transmission.

Face shields

Face shields are designed to protect the wearer's eyes and face from splashes and sprays. They are worn over a mask for additional protection.

Many people have asked if they can wear a face shield instead of a non-medical mask to reduce the spread of COVID-19. The short answer is no — face shields and masks are not designed for the same purpose.



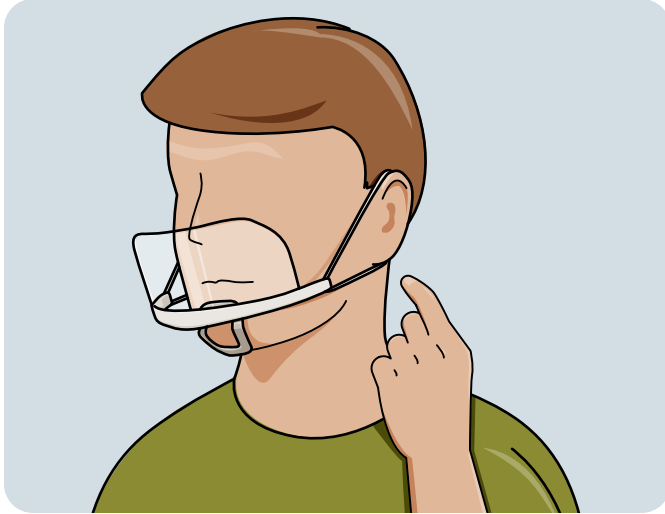
Face shield and mask

The design of the face shield does not necessarily protect others because it does not block all droplets and spray, which can escape from the bottom or sides of the shield.

Some face shields may provide better source control than others — for example, those that wrap around the wearer's entire face and below the chin. Regardless, the BCCDC recommends against the use of face shields as a substitute for masks.

Mouth shields

Mouth shields, such as catering masks that don't fully cover the nose and mouth, offer less protection than face shields and masks.



Catering mask

Mouth shields usually only cover 5–7 cm (2–3 in.) of the face. As with face shields, mouth shields are not designed to block droplets.

Don't use mouth shields in place of a mask or a face shield with a mask.

Face shields don't replace other prevention measures

Employers may include face shields in their COVID-19 safety plans as an additional protective measure for workers. However, using a face shield does not mean that other measures are no longer necessary, such as limiting access to the workplace, maintaining physical distancing, barriers, and the use of non-medical masks.

Let's all do our part

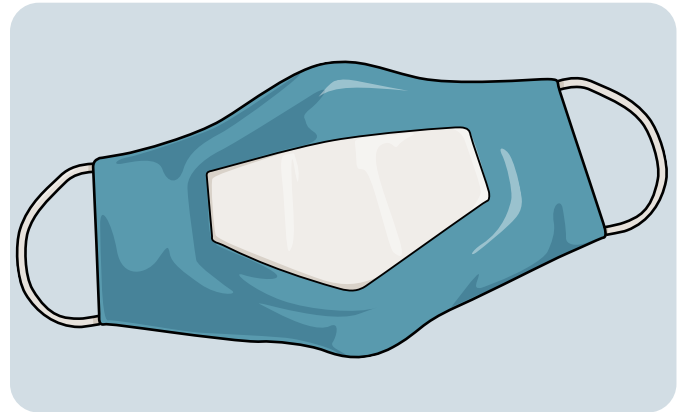
When workplaces in British Columbia are healthy and safe, they contribute to a healthy and safe province. For more information and resources on workplace health and safety, visit [worksafebc.com](https://www.worksafebc.com).

Review [Selecting and using masks in non-health care settings](#) for more information about masks.

Supporting visual communication

In some circumstances wearing a mask with a face shield can create challenges — for example, when communicating with a hearing-impaired person where visual facial cues are essential, or interacting with young children.

Based on an assessment of the risks, you may consider a face shield as an alternative for situations where other control measures are in place. A clear mask (visible mouth area) that covers the nose and mouth is another option when visual communication is necessary.



Clear mask

Cleaning and maintaining face shields

- Only wear disposable face shields once.
- Disinfect reusable face shields after each use. Use a compatible disinfectant that will not damage the plastic.
- As with masks, wash your hands before putting on and after taking off face shields.