

EXPANDED MASK MANDATE FAQ

How are masks effective?

Masks are one of many layers of protection we use to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Wearing a mask should be combined with other important protective measures such as getting both doses of your COVID-19 vaccine, frequent hand washing, and avoiding crowded spaces.

Masks are most effective when fitted, worn, and handled correctly. They act as a barrier and help stop the spread of droplets from a person's mouth and nose when talking, laughing, yelling, singing, coughing, or sneezing.

Why are masks now mandatory for students in grades K-3?

Layers of protection to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (including masks) can be especially important for children younger than age 12, who are not yet eligible for the COVID-19 vaccines. Consistent and correct use of face masks [likely reduces the spread of SARS-CoV-2](#) and can be safely worn by children [two years of age and older](#).

[Many studies](#) that have shown success in limiting transmission in schools have required that only staff or both staff and students wear masks as one of the school's prevention strategies.

How is mask wearing beneficial when schools have multiple layers of prevention measures already in place?

Maintaining in-person learning is high priority given the negative impacts of school closures. The expansion of the mask mandate in B.C. schools is to help increase confidence in the school system, lower anxiety, and ensure that students and staff feel comfortable attending school in person. Masks may also add an additional layer of protection in reducing COVID-19 transmission.

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What if my child struggles with mask wearing and/or has conditions that prevent them from wearing a mask?

Some people cannot wear a mask because they cannot put on or remove a mask on their own or for psychological, behavioural or health conditions. School administrators, teachers, and support staff continue to support student mask wearing through positive and inclusive approaches and will work with students to foster proper mask usage including how to wear, take off, and store masks. School communities are reminded to be respectful of people who can't wear a mask.

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