

Local Health Units Announce Regional Approach to Mandatory Masks

Today Medical Officers of Health from Eastern Ontario Health Unit; Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit; Renfrew County and District Health Unit and Ottawa Public Health announced a regional approach to the use of masks in their respective jurisdictions.

Each public health unit will be invoking a directive under the province's [Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act](#) that requires individuals to wear a mask in certain enclosed public spaces. Under the directive, the person responsible for a business or organization that is open shall operate the business or organization in compliance with the advice, recommendations and instructions of public health officials, including any advice, recommendations or instructions on physical distancing, cleaning or disinfecting. The EOHU's Directive takes effect as of July 7th at 12:00 A.M.

"Wearing a mask or face covering in indoor public spaces accessed by the public adds another level of protection against the spread of COVID-19" states Dr. Paul Roumeliotis, Medical Officer of Health at the EOHU. "There is scientific evidence that wearing a mask is an effective way of preventing the spread of COVID-19, and it's another measure we are adding to our arsenal as we get ready for stage 3 of reopening and back-to-school in the fall."

The decision to implement a mandatory masking policy made by the 4 health units in Eastern Ontario follows the initiative of other health units across the province and will decrease the odds of having to shut down the economy again due to outbreaks of COVID-19. "Mandatory masks will help support businesses and service providers throughout the region as they resume operations by reducing the risk of an outbreak in their workplace, adding another layer of protection for their employees, and increasing customers' confidence that they can enjoy a safe return to shopping and other activities," says Dr. Roumeliotis.

The new Directive is in effect as of July 7th. However, there will be an enforcement grace period of one week until July 14th at 12:00 A.M. The EOHU will use an educational approach focused on signage in premises, the training of staff on masking policies, and notifying customers of the Directive. The masks or face coverings used will have to securely cover the nose, mouth and chin. Exemptions will be made for individuals who cannot wear a mask due to health concerns or other valid reasons. For more information, please consult the [highlights of the EOHU's Directive for Mandatory Masking in Indoor Public Spaces](#) on the EOHU's website.

Mask Wearing to Complement Other Measures to Limit Spread of COVID-19

The EOHU reminds residents that while wearing a mask or face covering can help prevent the spread of infectious respiratory droplets, it's not a substitute for physical distancing and handwashing. "In addition to wearing a mask, it's also very important to continue practising good hand hygiene and, when possible, to keep a distance of at least 2 metres from other people when you're out in public," says Dr. Roumeliotis. He adds that information on proper mask use as well as other tips for protecting yourself against COVID-19 are available on the EOHU's website at www.EOHU.ca/coronavirus or the Government of Ontario's website at covid-19.ontario.ca.

For more information about this press release, please send your request to media@eohu.ca.