

# MASK UP FOR SOMEONE YOU LOVE!

## A joint letter from the COVID-19 Respiratory Roundtable

April 2022

As provincial, territorial and federal public health guidelines on COVID-19 continue to evolve, we recognize that people, businesses and workplaces will react differently to these changes. Nevertheless, a common goal for all Canadians is to remain healthy. As a group of professional societies and patient organizations working closely with individuals living with lung disease and supporting the lung health of Canadians, members of the COVID-19 Respiratory Roundtable are concerned about the ongoing risk of COVID-19, particularly in the wake of easing of public health restrictions.

### Your choices make a difference

Despite a relatively high rate of vaccination across Canada, the risk of COVID-19 spread remains. We need to be mindful of how the individual choices we make will affect vulnerable and high-risk groups: the elderly, children under five years of age who are not yet vaccinated, individuals with underlying health conditions and the health care professionals who have been working to protect and provide high-quality health care to Canadians throughout the pandemic. Wearing a mask also helps to protect you. An estimated 10% of those infected will experience Long COVID – a range of long-term symptoms, some quite serious, even for people who had mild initial illness.

### Improving indoor air quality is only part of the solution

You may have heard that organizations and facilities are working to increase ventilation to improve indoor air quality. Keep in mind that although improving indoor air quality is an important measure, proper ventilation alone cannot protect you from exposure to the virus responsible for COVID-19. This is particularly true during close, unmasked contact and in the absence of other protective measures.

### Please Keep Masking

Wearing a mask is an added layer of protection. The COVID-19 Respiratory Roundtable **urges** Canadians to continue wearing a mask indoors especially in poorly ventilated areas and when physical distancing may not be possible or proves to be challenging in crowded areas. If wearing a face mask is not possible, we recommend that individuals instead minimize exposure to indoor congregate settings.

We support the SMART MASKING campaign by [Masks4Canada.org](https://Masks4Canada.org) which promotes keeping our common spaces safe with masks, for those most at risk.

### How you can help

- ✓ **Continue to wear a medical mask and upgrade when possible (e.g., N95 or KN95 rated mask which offers the highest filtration levels).**
- ✓ **Ensure you are up to date with your COVID-19 vaccine, including recommended booster doses. If you have any concerns, we encourage you to speak to a health care professional.**
- ✓ **Improve indoor air quality and ventilation.**
- ✓ **Stay home if you have COVID-like symptoms.**

We know that "COVID fatigue" is real, as we feel it too. We look forward to the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, but that day is not yet here. Please, remember that the choices you make today help protect yourself, your loved ones, vulnerable and high-risk populations, and bring that day closer to reality.



### About the COVID-19 Respiratory Roundtable:

Since the onset of the pandemic, the Canadian Thoracic Society (CTS) has developed numerous position statements to provide clinical guidance for health care professionals (<https://cts-sct.ca/covid-19/>). In April 2020, the Canadian Thoracic Society (CTS) brought together a group of professional societies and patient organizations from across Canada to form the COVID-19 Respiratory Roundtable. The Roundtable meets monthly to exchange information on pandemic-related activities and strategies, align messaging and identify opportunities for collaboration. Members disseminate CTS guidance to their professional constituents and translate these guidelines into public and patient education materials and programs.