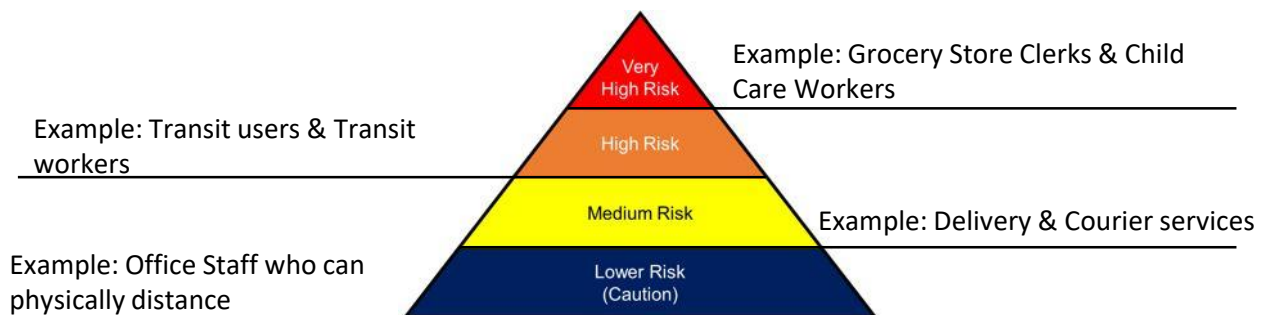## Masking at Carleton University

Surgical and non-medical masks such as cloth masks, bandanas, or other types of coverings can be used to slow the spread of COVID-19 should the wearer be asymptomatic or presymptomatic for COVID-19. This is known as a **control at the source.** The use of such masks should be secondary to more effective controls such as physical distancing and handwashing.

Masking as a source control – The principles

- Masks worn as a source control will only protect others from the wearer. *It will not protect the wearer from viruses that are transmitted by others.*
- Due to the current shortage of surgical grade masks, cloth masks are the preferred type.
- Masking may result in more hand to face contact – Proper hand washing or cleaning with alcohol-based hand sanitizer is critical – perform hand washing immediately after putting on and removing any mask.
- Masking is not mandatory, and some individuals may have pre-existing conditions that make the wearing of masks difficult.
- Masking is not recommended if it introduces additional hazards such as breathing issues.

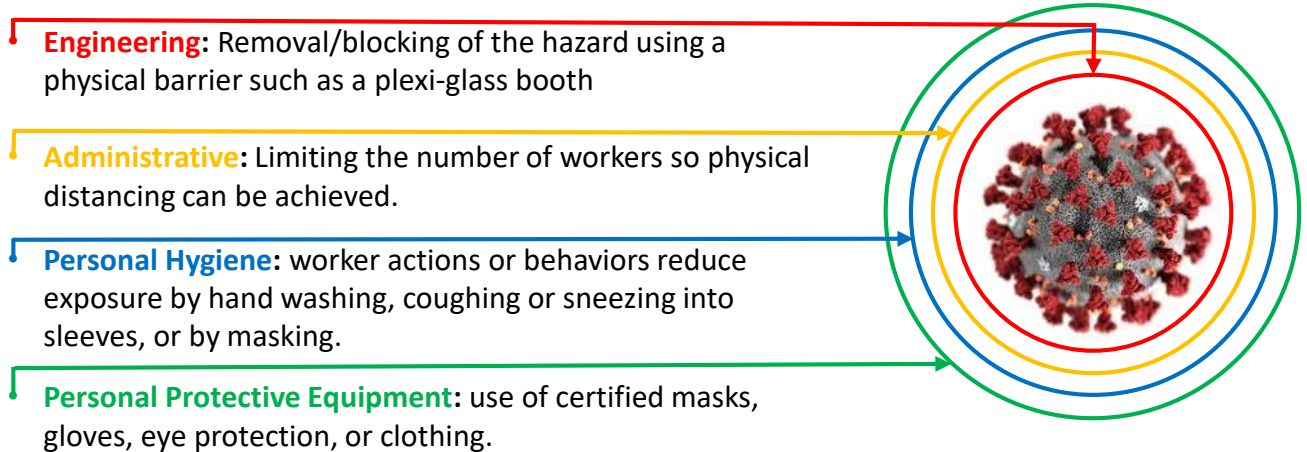## Masking use – When should it be done?

- Managers must assess if source control could be helpful, based upon the working situation.
- Masking should not be considered as the primary control when physical distancing and other controls (barriers) can be used to eliminate risk.

Example: Transit users & Transit workers

Example: Grocery Store Clerks & Child Care Workers

Very High Risk

High Risk

Medium Risk

Example: Delivery & Courier services

Example: Office Staff who can physically distance

Lower Risk (Caution)

- Where it is not possible to practice physical distancing or staff have frequent contact with the public, masking could be considered for source control both for staff and the public.

Hierarchy of controls for COVID-19

The best strategy to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission in the workplace is to include multiple levels of controls and not to rely upon only one control. These include:

Engineering: Removal/blocking of the hazard using a physical barrier such as a plexi-glass booth

Administrative: Limiting the number of workers so physical distancing can be achieved.

Personal Hygiene: worker actions or behaviors reduce exposure by hand washing, coughing or sneezing into sleeves, or by masking.

Personal Protective Equipment: use of certified masks, gloves, eye protection, or clothing.

Masking for source control is considered a personal hygiene measure. Once again, it protects other people, not the wearer of the mask. If masking is used on campus, the following is recommended:

- Masks must be changed if visibly soiled, damp, damaged or difficult to breathe through.
- Breathability, comfort, and safety take precedence over masking. When wearing masks, it is critical to avoid touching the face and to clean hands regularly.
- Masking as a source control is one element in a broad strategy of controls used to mitigate transmission risk.

Additional resources

Public Health Agency of Canada - https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks/about-non-medical-masks-face-coverings.html

Ontario Ministry of Health - https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-stop-spread#section-2