

FAQs: Mask Use Exemption Letters

What is the new public order for mask exemptions?

On May 13, 2021, the Government of Alberta passed an order requiring any Albertan seeking an exemption to public mask use to have a letter from either a physician, nurse practitioner or psychologist. The **only** criteria for which a medical exemption letter can be issued includes:

- Sensory processing disorders
- Developmental delay
- Cognitive impairment
- Mental illnesses including:
 - anxiety disorders
 - psychotic disorders
 - dissociative identity disorder
 - depressive disorders
- Facial trauma or recent oral maxillofacial surgery.
- Contact dermatitis or allergic reactions to mask components.
- Clinically significant acute respiratory distress.

Is my physician obligated to provide me with an exemption letter?

Physicians must follow the criteria for mask exemption listed above. They are not obligated to provide an exemption letter if their clinical judgment determines a patient does not qualify.

If I ask a physician to provide me with a letter for a condition they are not treating me for, should they provide one?

If you qualify for a mask exemption, the physician who provides your care should ideally provide your medical exemption letter. For example, an emergency room physician should not provide a letter for a patient with a qualifying mental health condition. In this instance, the letter should be provided by the patient's primary care physician.

What should I expect when I ask my physician for a mask exemption?

Your physician will assess whether you qualify for an exemption based on the criteria provided by the Chief Medical Office of Health.

It is possible your physician will determine you are not eligible for an exemption. Even if you don't receive the response you were hoping for, please treat your physician with respect and trust their clinical judgment. If a physician provides a letter that's not consistent with the public health order, they could be at risk of unprofessional conduct. For this reason,

please do not put undue pressure on your physician and understand their obligation to uphold the public health order.

Physicians have a responsibility to triage and manage their patient's needs, ensuring those with urgent, serious care needs are prioritized for evaluation. Depending on your physician's workload, a request for a mask exemption assessment may require advance booking or deferral to a future appointment.

How does the medical exemption letter work?

If you are issued a medical exemption letter, you do not need to have the letter with you at all times. However, if you are issued a ticket for not wearing a mask, you will need to provide the letter to the courts to prove you qualify for a mask exemption.

Are any groups of Albertans exempt from the exemption letter requirement?

Yes, the following exemptions apply to students and children:

- A child under two years of age does not need to wear a face mask at all times while attending an indoor public place.
- A child does not need to wear a face mask while attending any of the following child care programs:
 - a facility-based program providing day care, out-of-school care or preschool care;
 - a family dayhome program;
 - a group family child care program;
 - an innovative child care program.
- A student, including a student who attends a home schooling co-op, does not need to wear a face mask while attending:
 - an early childhood services program;
 - grades one through three at an indoor location within a school building; or
 - the home schooling equivalent to an early childhood services program, grades one, two and three at a home schooling co-op.

Can my physician be exempt from wearing a mask?

All physicians providing patient care in community medical clinics should wear a surgical/procedure mask at all times. However, in cases where a physician cannot wear a mask and they have a medical exemption letter, they must interact with patients in a way that offers at least as much protection as masking. For example, they might:

- switch to virtual appointments and assessments
- postpone procedures requiring interaction at a distance of less than two metres
- refer patients to other physicians