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NEWS

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN SHOPPING FOR A MASK

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For the most part, children in Grade 4 and up who return to school this September won't have a choice but to wear a non-medical mask, thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Face coverings like cloth masks help stop the spread of the virus by preventing infected wearers from passing it to others.

Clothing retailers and designers have had all summer to improve on the humble cloth mask, and now there's something stylish, silly or simple for everyone.

However, when shopping for a mask, there are some important things to consider, according to

Wendy Pons, a certified public health inspector and professor at Conestoga College's Environmental Health Program.

"All masks should fit well and cover the mouth, nose and chin," Pons said. "There should be no gaps on the sides of the face. Adjustable ear loops can help make a better fit."

Pons said children's masks should allow them to breathe easily while talking and walking. Cloth masks should ideally consist of three layers of fabric: an outer layer made from a polyester or polyester-cotton material, an inner layer made from cotton and an insert made from a polypropylene fabric.

Pons said masks should be changed daily or any

time they become dirty or wet. Cloth masks should be washed between uses. Pons also suggested parents label masks with a child's name so they don't get mixed up with others at school when they are removed for activities like eating.

"Also, it's important for people to remember that masks are only part of the strategy to protect yourself from COVID-19," Pons said. "Handwashing and physical distancing are still the best ways to stay safe."

More information about how to properly select, use and store a face covering or mask is available on the province's website, www.ontario.ca/page/face-coverings-and-face-masks.

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