

Masks with exhalation valves don't protect others from COVID-19, health officials say.

CTV News article: <https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/masks-with-exhalation-valves-don-t-protect-others-from-covid-19-health-officials-say-1.5063976>

Not all masks provide the same level of protection to the wearer and those around them. Increasingly, health officials, countries, cities and airlines are recommending against masks with an exhaust valve – or outright banning them.

These masks look like any other face covering, but have the addition of a raised plastic valve, around the size of a quarter, and usually set into one half of the mask.

The valve itself can be called a respirator valve, exhalation valve, or exhaust valve.

According to Health Canada's website, wearing a mask with a valve will do little to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

“Some commercially available respirators have exhaust valves which are intended to make the respirator more comfortable for the person wearing it, but also allows infectious respiratory droplets to be released outside the respirator.”

The concept of the exhalation valve is that on an outward breath, the valve opens to allow the exhalation to escape and prevent the buildup of heat and bacteria on the inside of the mask.

Health officials have emphasized numerous times that the main purpose of wearing face masks is to prevent others from you, not the other way around. Wearing a face mask may provide the wearer more protection from contracting the virus than not wearing one, but its main goal is to cut down on droplets expelled from a person's mouth when they breathe, sneeze or cough.

