

COVID-19 and face masks

Should I use a face mask?

Wearing a face mask in Australia is recommended by health experts in areas where community transmission of COVID-19 is high, whenever physical distancing is not possible.

Wearing face masks may protect you from droplets (small drops) when a person with COVID-19 coughs, speaks or sneezes, and you are less than 1.5 metres away from them. Wearing a mask will also help protect others if you are infected with the virus, but do not have symptoms of infection.

When thinking about wearing a face mask consider the following:

- Face masks may protect you when it is not possible to maintain the 1.5 metre physical distance from other people e.g. on a crowded bus or train or in a shopping centre
- Are you older or do you have other medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes or respiratory illness? People in these groups may get more severe illness if they are infected with COVID-19
- Wearing a face mask will reduce the spread of droplets from your coughs and sneezes to others (however, if you have any cold or flu-like symptoms or feel unwell, you should stay home)
- A face mask will not provide you with complete protection from COVID-19. You should also do all of the other things listed below to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

What can you do to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

Stopping the spread of COVID-19 is everyone's responsibility. The most important things that you can do to protect yourself and others are to:

- Stay at home when you are unwell, with even mild respiratory symptoms
- Regularly wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub
- Do not touch your face
- Do not touch surfaces that may be contaminated with the virus
- Stay at least 1.5 metres away from other people (physical distancing)
- Cover your mouth when you cough by coughing into your elbow, or into a tissue. Throw the tissue away immediately.



When you wear a face mask some things to remember are:

HOW TO PUT ON A FACE MASK



1 Clean your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.



2 Hold the mask by its tapes or loops, then tie the mask around your head or put the loops around your ears.



3 Make sure the mask covers your mouth and nose, and that there are no gaps between your face and the mask, and press the nose piece around your nose.



4 Do not touch the front of the mask while wearing it.

HOW TO TAKE OFF A FACE MASK



1 Clean your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.



2 Take the mask off from behind your head by pulling the tapes or loops straight forward and moving the mask away from your face.



3 Throw the mask in the bin.



4 Clean your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.

Choosing a mask

You can use a cloth mask or a surgical mask. Surgical masks can only be used once. You can wash and reuse cloth masks. Face coverings such as scarves may not offer the same level of protection.

You can buy a mask or make your own cloth mask that covers your nose and mouth completely, or use a face shield.

When you put on or take off the mask or shield, it is important that you wash your hands first and avoid touching your face. After each use, wash the cloth or shield or dispose of it safely.

For more information about COVID-19 please visit:

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-resources> or [safetyandquality.gov.au/covid-19](https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/covid-19)

For more information about using face masks, please visit:

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/face-masks-covid-19>

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/how-to-protect-yourself-and-others-from-coronavirus-covid-19/masks>

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/when-and-how-to-use-masks>