

# COVID-19 and face masks

## Should I use a face mask?

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.

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. Deciding whether to wear a face mask is your personal choice. Some people may feel more comfortable wearing a face mask in the community.

When thinking about whether wearing a face mask is right for you, 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
- 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 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.



If you decide to 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** Avoid touching the front of the mask. Only touch the ear loops or tapes.



**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

There is currently no evidence on what type of mask to use in the community. You can buy a mask or use a covering made of cloth or material which you can breathe through. For example a scarf that covers the mouth and nose, or a face shield that covers your nose and mouth completely.

When you put on or take off the covering, it is important that you wash your hands first and avoid touching your face. After each use, wash the cloth face covering 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.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-use-of-masks-by-the-public-in-the-community>

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