

Important things to know about wearing a mask



Practicing good hygiene measures is the most critical way to protect yourself and others from respiratory illnesses such as influenza and the coronavirus. The use of a medical mask by the general public is not encouraged.

What are Medical Masks?

Medical masks are surgical or procedure masks that are flat or pleated (some are like cups). They are placed over the mouth and nose and held in place by straps which are tied at the back of the head. It is intended for public health and infection prevention and control professionals, health care workers and community health workers.

Are medical masks a prevention measure for respiratory illnesses such as influenza and coronavirus?

Wearing medical masks is one of the prevention measures to limit spread of certain respiratory diseases, including the coronavirus in **affected areas**. However, the use of a mask alone is insufficient to provide the adequate level of protection and other equally relevant measures should be adopted. Masks should be worn by persons displaying symptoms of respiratory illness.

Should I wear a mask as a protection measure against novel coronavirus?

A medical mask is not required for those who are **not sick** as there is no evidence to show its usefulness in protecting non-sick persons.

Wearing medical masks when not indicated may cause unnecessary cost, and create a false sense of security that can lead to neglecting other essential measures such as hand hygiene practices.

What are the recommendations at this time on wearing masks?

- Health care professions who are directly dealing with a confirmed or suspected case.
- Persons displaying symptoms of respiratory illness in the health facility may be asked to wear one.

What are the measures of prevention that are critical whether or not you wear a mask?

- Frequent hand washing with soap and water
- Cover mouth and nose when sneezing or coughing with disposable paper tissues which should be thrown away immediately.
- Avoid close contact with persons displaying respiratory symptoms (i.e., at least 1 meter away) to minimize exposure to droplets from coughing and sneezing

MASK ETIQUETTE

If there becomes a need to wear a mask, appropriate use and disposal of masks are essential to ensure they are effective and to avoid any increase in risk of transmission associated with the incorrect use and disposal of masks.

The following information on correct use of medical masks derives from the practices in health-care settings:

- ✓ Place mask carefully to cover mouth and nose and tie securely to minimise any gaps between the face and the mask;
- ✓ While in use, avoid touching the mask;
- ✓ Remove the mask by using appropriate technique (i.e. do not touch the front but remove the lace from behind);
- ✓ After removal or whenever you inadvertently touch a used mask, clean hands by using an alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water if visibly soiled
- ✓ Replace masks with a new clean, dry mask as soon as they become damp/humid;
- ✓ Do not re-use single-use masks;
- ✓ Discard single-use masks after each use and dispose of them immediately upon removal in a closed bin.