Best Practice COVID-19 Workplace Safety:
Face masks

KEEP IT

COVID safe

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This fact sheet provides best practice guidance on the use of face masks in the community, including workplaces and at events, to help protect against COVID-19, influenza and other respiratory viruses.

Please use this information alongside other Tasmanian best practice guidance, including *Best Practice COVID-19 Safety for Employers.*

When are face masks recommended?

Wearing face masks remains a valuable protection against COVID-19, influenza and other respiratory viruses.

Best practice COVID-19 workplace safety is to support workers to wear face masks if they choose to do so or a workplace risk assessment deems it is necessary.

Use of face masks in the workplace helps workers to protect themselves and to protect others. Encouraging the use of face masks is also a reminder to workers, customers, and visitors that your workplace takes COVID-19 safety seriously.

Face masks are recommended during periods of increased rates of staff illness due to respiratory infections, to help slow the spread of illness. Masks are also recommended when the risk of COVID-19 in the community is moderate or high.

Face masks are also recommended anytime for anyone in the workplace who:

- chooses to wear a face mask
- is working indoors and unable to physically distance
- cannot physically distance from other people
- develops COVID-19 symptoms while at work, until they leave work and arrive at their place of residence
- is living with a person who has COVID-19 or influenza
- is at risk of severe illness, including people who are not up to date with vaccination, aged 65 years or older and/or with specific underlying medical conditions (check with your doctor) and pregnant women
- provides services directly to people at risk of severe illness, especially if physical distancing is not feasible.
- if people with respiratory symptoms or who have tested positive to COVID-19 must leave home face masks are recommended to be worn in indoor settings and on public transport for COVID-19 for 7 days

Why are face masks important?

COVID-19 spreads through exposure to respiratory droplets.

When we cough and sneeze, and even laugh and talk, tiny droplets and aerosol particles (very tiny droplets) get forced into the air. If a person has been infected with a respiratory virus (for example, the virus that causes COVID-19) these droplets may contain tiny amounts of the virus. If another person breathes those droplets or aerosolised particles in, they may become infected with the virus.

The more crowded and less ventilated a room is, the more droplets and particles there are likely to be in that environment.

Wearing a face mask provides a barrier, reducing the risk of the wearer expelling droplets and potentially infecting others, or breathing in droplets from others.

How can I support the use of face masks?

- Keep a supply of disposable surgical face masks readily available for use in the workplace.
- Lead by example. Help normalise the use of face masks in your workplace.
- Consider a workplace face mask policy, particularly for workers in customer-facing roles and for workers who are likely to interact with people at risk of severe illness.
- Consider promoting the use of face masks for workers and visitors during periods of high community prevalence of COVID-19 and/or high levels of workers illness.
- Display information about how to use face masks safely, including changing them every four hours or when soiled/damp, and not reusing single-use surgical masks.

The management of COVID-19 continues to evolve, and as evidence accumulates, advice may be revised. Updates are available at www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au. If any information in this factsheet is inconsistent with information on that website, please use the information online.

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