

Face masks in the workplace



This fact sheet provides information about the use of face masks to help you keep your employees and customers safe. It should be read together with advice from the Chief Health Officer and the Department of Health and Human Services issued on 10 July 2020.

What is the latest advice about masks?

If you live or work in an area under Stage 3 restrictions it is recommended that you wear a mask when leaving home, if you cannot maintain physical distancing of 1.5 metres between yourself and other people.

- Wearing a mask provides a physical barrier to coronavirus (COVID-19), protecting you and those around you.
- Keeping 1.5 metres between yourself and others and washing your hands are still the best defence against coronavirus (COVID-19). If you are feeling unwell or have any symptoms of coronavirus you should stay home and get tested.
- The recommendation to wear a mask does not apply to children (people aged under 18 years), people with breathing difficulties and those with physical conditions that make it hard to wear a cloth mask. Children under two years of age should not wear a mask at any time.
- The wearing of masks is not compulsory. There will be no enforcement on their use.

What are the different types of masks and which one should I use?

The term 'mask' includes cloth masks and single-use facemasks (commonly called surgical masks). If your business considers that masks should be used, you should consider providing staff with reusable cloth masks or single use surgical masks. Reusable masks must be cleaned and disinfected between uses.

- Cloth masks are any nose and mouth covering made of washable fabric. A cloth mask should be made of three layers of a mix of breathable fabrics to ensure adequate protection. It does not need to be surgical quality to be effective. Cloth masks have been recommended around the world for use by the community to prevent transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).
- Surgical masks are made with a non-woven meltblown polypropylene layer and available in various levels of protection. These masks are single use.
- There are other types of masks and respirators (such as P2 or N95). These are not recommended for use in the community, or outside of industries such as healthcare. Make sure your mask does not have holes or a valve. This can result in breathing out the virus if you have coronavirus (COVID-19).

Where can I buy masks?

Cloth and single-use masks are available from wholesale and retail outlets including chemists, workwear and safety equipment providers, office suppliers and hardware stores. You are encouraged to buy masks online or you can follow these directions to [make your own cloth mask](#).

How do I wear a mask correctly?

Please check the Department of Health and Human Services website for instructions on how to [correctly wear masks](#). This is to ensure that you have maximum protection for yourself and others.

What are my responsibilities as an employer?

Employers have a responsibility to identify whether there is a risk to the health of employees from exposure to coronavirus (COVID-19) at their workplace, as well as areas where employees are unable to stay 1.5 metres apart.

Employers and employees have legal duties under the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004. See [WorkSafe Victoria](#) and [Safe Work Australia](#) for information about minimising health risks in your workplace.

Does your business need support?

Sources of current advice, information and resources include:

- The Victorian Department of Health and Human Services is the control agency for Victoria's response to coronavirus – please visit dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus.
- National Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080. This number operates 24/7 - if you require translating or interpreting services, please call 131 450.
- If you suspect you or your staff may have coronavirus call the DHHS dedicated hotline on 1800 675 398.
- [Business Victoria](#) provides guidance and support for every stage of your business to plan, start and grow including access to grants, low-cost workshops and free mentoring services. For all enquiries about business services and programs refer to business.vic.gov.au or phone 13 22 15.