



Novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV)

Information on the Use of Surgical Masks

There is currently an outbreak of novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) in mainland China.

Should I wear a surgical mask?

General Public

Surgical masks in the community are only helpful in preventing people who are infected with coronavirus from spreading it to others. If you are well, you do not need to wear a surgical mask as there is little evidence supporting the widespread use of surgical masks in healthy people to prevent transmission in public.

If you are being self-isolated due to one of the following circumstances:

- You have travelled from Hubei Province within the past 14 days; or
- You have left, or transited through, mainland China on or after 1 February 2020; or
- You have been in close contact with a confirmed case of novel coronavirus;

Then, you should use a surgical mask (if you have one) in the following circumstances:

- You need to leave your home for any reason and be in public areas;
- You are visiting a medical facility; or
- You have symptoms and other people are present in the same room as you.

Suspected Case

If you are suspected to be infected with 2019-nCoV, your primary care provider will give you a surgical mask to wear when you enter the emergency department or general practice. You should follow their advice on how to fit and wear the surgical mask. You should continue to use the surgical mask in all public places until you are advised otherwise by public health authorities.

If you are suspected to have coronavirus, you can find more information here:

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-information-sheet-for-people-with-a-suspected-case-yi-si-bing-li-huan-zhe-xu-zhi>

Confirmed Case

If you are confirmed to have 2019-nCoV infection, follow the advice of your primary care provider and public health authorities on wearing a surgical mask. You should wear a surgical mask if you need to leave the house; when you are in contact with health care workers; or, when you have symptoms and other people are in the same room.

Health Care Workers

A surgical mask should be used while reviewing suspected cases, along with existing personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements, including standard, contact and droplet precautions (gloves, gown, and eye protection). Please ensure suspected cases also wear a surgical mask while in your clinic or waiting room, until they are placed in isolation.

A P2/N95 or equivalent particulate filter respirator (fit tested mask) must be worn while collecting respiratory specimens or performing other aerosol generating procedures in symptomatic patients, along with your existing PPE requirements.

More information on PPE requirements for health workers can be found in the following information sheets:

Information for primary and community health workers:

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-information-sheet-for-primary-and-community-health-workers>

Information for emergency departments:

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-information-sheet-for-emergency-departments>

Pathology specimen collectors

Current information on PPE requirements can be found here:

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-information-sheet-for-primary-and-community-health-workers>

More information for pathology specimen collectors can be found here:

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/phln-guidance-on-laboratory-testing-for-2019-ncov>

Airline Passengers and Staff

Passengers returning from Hubei Province on repatriated flights will be provided with specific information on the use of surgical masks.

For all other passengers on airplanes, if you are not in self-isolation and do not have symptoms, then you do not need to wear a surgical mask. If you do have symptoms, ask a member of the cabin crew for a surgical mask.

If available, a surgical mask should be given to any ill passenger or crew member to wear. If a staff member needs to interact with an ill person, they may wish to wear a surgical mask and follow existing agency infection prevention work instructions and PPE requirements.

Additional information for airplane staff can be found at:

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-information-sheet-for-the-airline-industry>

How do I get a surgical mask?

If you suspect you are ill with coronavirus, you should seek health care from a hospital or your general practice GP, where you can also get further information on surgical masks.

The Australian Government is supporting general practices that are seeing patients with suspected coronavirus and are unable to access sufficient surgical masks. These surgical masks should be available through primary health networks (PHNs). General practices should contact their local PHN in the first instance and outline their needs.

General practices and medical practitioners are encouraged to refer to the Department of Health website which includes specific information on treating possible coronavirus patients.

How can I help prevent the spread of 2019-nCoV?

Practising good hand and sneeze/cough hygiene is the best defence against most viruses. You should:

- wash your hands often with soap and water before and after eating as well as after going to the toilet;
- cough and sneeze into a tissue and dispose of it after use, or use your elbow if a tissue is not available;
- avoid close contact with others; and
- stay home if you are ill.

Where can I get more information?

For the latest advice, information and resources, go to the Australian Government Department of Health website at www.health.gov.au. You will find information on novel coronavirus symptoms and preventing the spread.

Call the National Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080. The line operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you require translating or interpreting services, call 131 450.

The telephone number of your state or territory public health agency is available on the coronavirus page at www.health.gov.au/state-territory-contacts.

If you have concerns about your health, speak to your doctor.