



## Use of masks by the public in the community

**In Australia the routine use of face masks in the community is currently not recommended, while the rate of community transmission of COVID-19 is low.**

**A face mask is not a substitute** for other precautions to prevent spread of COVID-19:

- **staying at home when unwell**, with even mild respiratory symptoms
- **physical distancing** (staying >1.5 m away from others)
- **hand hygiene** (and avoidance of touching potentially contaminated surfaces)
- **cough etiquette and respiratory hygiene**

### **Inappropriate use of masks is associated with risk**

- they provide a false sense of security and may result in neglect of more important measures
- the use of a mask, alone, will not prevent infection
- touching the mask during use or when removing it can contaminate the hands
  - risks are compounded if masks are pulled down or removed to consume food or drink
  - **single-use masks should not be reused, but discarded immediately after use**
- masks will be less effective if they become damp or damaged
- many commercially available masks are of low quality and likely to be ineffective
- **P2 or N95 masks should not be used** as they are difficult to put on and take off safely

However, some members of the public may choose to wear a mask in situations where it is not feasible to maintain physical distancing e.g. on public transport and/or if they are at increased risk of severe illness if infected (e.g. because of their age or a chronic medical condition).

## If you choose to wear a mask it is important to do so safely to avoid increasing the risk of infection to yourself and others.

How to put on a disposable face mask:

- Wash your hands before putting on the mask
- Make sure it covers your nose and mouth and fits snugly under your chin, over the bridge of your nose and against the sides of your face.
- Do not touch the front of the mask while it is on or when removing it (and if you do so accidentally, wash or clean your hands immediately)
- Wash your hands after removing the mask

People with chronic respiratory conditions should seek medical advice before using a mask.