BE COVID**SAFE**

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). This may provide some additional protection in these circumstances.

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.