



9 July 2020

## When should masks be worn in the community, in Australia?

The advice about wearing masks in the community has been the same since the pandemic began: it is not generally recommended. The chance of coming into contact with someone with COVID-19 is low.

**Most states and territories are easing restrictions and it is important to continue to take steps to protect yourself.**

You should continue to:

- stay at home if unwell
- maintain physical distance (more than 1.5m) from other people, when out
- avoid large gatherings and crowded indoor spaces
- practise hand and respiratory hygiene

**However, if you are in a region where community transmission is occurring, you should take extra precautions, in some circumstances.**

If physical distancing is difficult to maintain, e.g. in public transport, covering your face with a mask can provide some extra protection. You will still need to maintain all the regular protection measures.

**The main value of wearing a mask is to protect other people. If the person wearing the mask is unknowingly infected, wearing a mask will reduce the chance of them passing the virus on to others.**

For people at increased risk of severe COVID-19 themselves because of older age or chronic illness, physical distancing is most important. If you cannot maintain physical distance, wearing a mask is an important protective measure.

For people who choose to wear a mask it is important to wear it properly:

- wash or sanitise your hands before putting it on or taking it off
- make sure the mask 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 your mask while wearing or removing it
- do not allow the mask to hang around your neck or under your nose
- do not reuse single use masks; wash and dry reusable masks after use and store in a clean dry place.

Note: Some people recommend using a face shield to provide eye protection or when masks are not available. This is noted and will remain under consideration.