

Victorian Face Mask Legislation_ October 2020

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/face-masks-vic-covid-19#i-have-a-medical-condition-that-prevents-me-from-wearing-a-face-mask-do-i-need-a-medical-certificate-stating-i-dont-need-to-wear-a-face-mask>

- Face shields, bandanas, or scarves on their own will no longer be considered a sufficient face covering.
- The lawful excuses for not wearing a face mask continue to apply.
- All Victorians must wear a face mask when they leave home. This continues to be an enforceable restriction.
- To provide yourself the best protection you should wear a mask that:
 - Is three layers
 - That covers your nose and mouth
 - That is well fitted – this means it should fit snugly over your nose and mouth

What does wearing a fitted face mask mean?

You must wear a face mask when you are leaving your home unless you have a lawful reason for not doing so. From 11:59pm 11 October you must wear a fitted face mask that covers the nose and mouth. This cannot be a face shield, bandana, or scarf on its own. A face mask needs to be worn covering both your nose and mouth.

- A fitted face mask is now required instead of other face coverings because it provides better protection. As restrictions ease and movement increases, the effectiveness of a face mask is even more important.
- A face mask includes any paper or textile covering designed or made to be worn over the nose and mouth to protect the wearer. It does not have to be medical grade and you can make your own. There are instructions on how to make a mask on the Department's website - [How to make a mask](#).

From 11:59pm 11 October you cannot wear a face shield on its own. You can wear a face shield with a face mask. If you have a lawful reason for not wearing a face mask, you can choose to wear a face shield on its own. A face shield means any film made from plastic or other transparent material designed or made to be worn like a visor, covering the wearer's forehead to below the chin area and wrapping around the sides of the wearer's face, to provide the wearer protection.

Is a scarf or bandana an appropriate face covering?

From 11:59pm 11 October you must wear a fitted face mask that covers the nose and mouth, designed to protect you from coronavirus (COVID-19). It does not mean a scarf or bandana.

The Chief Health Officer recommends [a mask with three layers](#) that fits securely around the face, specifically covering the nose and the mouth.

Why should I wear a fitted face mask?

You must wear a fitted face mask covering your nose and mouth when you are leaving your home, unless you have a lawful reason for not doing so.

As restrictions ease and movement increases, the effectiveness of a face mask is even more important.

Wearing a face mask helps keep you and others safe, and will help us reach COVID Normal. Coronavirus (COVID-19) is spread from close contact with a person with coronavirus (COVID-19). Face masks help stop droplets spreading when someone speaks, laughs, coughs, or sneezes, including someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19) but feels well.

The best way to protect other people against coronavirus (COVID-19) is keeping 1.5 metres apart, wash your hands often, and cough or sneeze into your elbow or tissue. Face masks are an additional protective physical barrier to protect you and your loved ones.

When do I have to wear a fitted face mask?

Unless an exception applies, you must wear a fitted face mask when you leave your home. This includes travelling on public transport, or with people outside of your household. You are not required to wear a face mask when driving with someone from your household, or if you are driving for work purposes on your own, for example, if you are a delivery driver.

What does 'fitted' mean?

A fitted mask means a mask that fits securely around the face, specifically covering the nose and the mouth areas. The mask should fit snugly on your face and be secured by ties at the back of your head or ear loops.

Face shields, bandanas, and scarves on their own are not sufficient as a fitted face mask.

Exceptions for not wearing a face mask

Lawful excuses or exceptions for not wearing a face mask

A face mask is not required in some circumstances including:

- Infants and children under the age of 12 years.
- A person who is affected by a relevant medical condition, including problems with their breathing, a serious condition of the face, a disability or a mental health condition.
- Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing, where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication.
- Persons for whom wearing a face mask would create a risk to that person's health and safety related to their work, as determined through OH&S guidelines.
- Persons whose professions require clear enunciation or visibility of their mouth. This includes teaching or live broadcasting.
- Professional sportspeople when training or competing.
- If you are working on your own property with members of your household, but no staff or contractors are on site.
- When you are doing any exercise or physical activity where you are out of breath or puffing. Examples include jogging or running, but not walking. You must carry a face mask on you and wear it when you finish exercising.
- When directed to remove the face mask to ascertain identity.
- When you are travelling in a vehicle by yourself or with other members of your household.
- When consuming food, drink or medication, including when seated at a restaurant where permitted.
- When undergoing dental treatment or other medical care to the extent that the procedure requires that no face mask may be worn.
- During emergencies.

You must carry a face mask with you when leaving home, even if you don't need to wear it while undertaking your current activity. For example, you can take your face mask off to eat or while you are running, but you must carry it with you and put it back on when you finish.

People with lawful exemptions for not wearing a face mask still need to keep 1.5 metres apart from others, washing or sanitising hands frequently and getting tested if unwell (even with mild symptoms). [Find out more](#) about staying safe.

I have a medical condition that prevents me from wearing a face mask, do I need a medical certificate stating I don't need to wear a face mask?

You do not need a medical certificate stating that you have a lawful reason for not wearing a face mask. If you have a lawful reason for not wearing a face mask, you do not need to apply for an exemption or permit.

If you are stopped by police, they will ask you to confirm the lawful reason you are not wearing a face mask.

Do people with a disability have to wear a face mask?

Yes, people with a disability must wear a face mask unless it is unsuitable to do so for medical, physical, communication or other individual risk factors.

If you have a lawful reason for not wearing a face mask, you can choose to wear a face shield on its own.

I have a lawful exception for not wearing a mask – can I wear a face shield or other face covering?

You can choose to wear a face shield on its own if you have a lawful reason for not wearing a face mask. Other types of coverings, including specially designed face coverings, can be worn by people who have a lawful exception to provide a level of protection.

Do residents of aged care facilities and other group homes need to wear face masks?

The requirement to wear face masks applies when people are outside of their home. It does not apply to aged care residents or other group home residents while they are in the facility. However, it does apply to the facility's staff and visitors, and when a resident leaves the facility.

What about people who have experienced trauma that makes it difficult for them to wear a face mask?

Some people who have past experiences of trauma are unable to wear a face mask due to psychological impacts. This is a valid reason not to wear or carry a face mask when you leave home.

What if I need to leave home as I fear for my safety or the safety of my children due to a family violence situation?

You do not have to wear a face mask when leaving home to seek emergency support and assistance because you or your children are escaping harm or are at risk of harm from family violence. If you are stopped by police, tell them you are feeling unsafe at home and they will help you.

Family violence frontline services, including crisis accommodation, continue to operate to support women, children and families during the coronavirus (COVID-19) emergency.

There are options for accessing safe housing if you need to leave a violent situation or you are not safe in your home.

Call safe steps on 1800 015 188 or email safesteps@safesteps.org.au for help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

For more info visit [Family violence support during coronavirus](#).

What about people who need to leave home in an emergency?

People who need to leave home in an emergency do not need to wear a face mask.

Can I take my face mask off if someone I am communicating with can't hear me?

You can remove your face mask if you are communicating with a person who is deaf or hard of hearing, where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication.

You should maintain physical distancing of 1.5 metres and if you need to cough or sneeze, do so into a tissue or your elbow.

Cloth masks

Can I still wear a cloth mask?

Yes, you can continue to wear a cloth mask, as long as it fitted closely and covers your nose and mouth.

How can I make a cloth mask?

Use our [guide to make a cloth mask \(PDF\)](#) that covers your nose and mouth and is made of washable fabric.

Tegar, Nancy and Amy from The Social Studio have produced a video to show the easy steps to make one yourself.

[Watch how to make a cloth mask.](#)

Does a cloth mask have to have three layers?

While the Chief Health Officer recommends a [mask with three layers](#), wearing a mask with less layers will still give you some protection. It is important it covers your nose and mouth

Can I wear a disposable mask?

Yes, however you should dispose of it after one use. You should dispose of your mask responsibly by putting it in the rubbish bin.

Can it just be a scarf or does it have to be a face mask?

Victorians need to wear a fitted face mask that covers the nose and mouth. Face shields, bandanas, scarves, on their own are no longer be considered a sufficient face covering.

As restrictions ease and movement increases, the effectiveness of a face mask is even more important.

A fitted face mask with three layers is the option recommended by the Chief Health Officer, as it provides the best protection for you and others

How do I wear a face mask correctly?

Cloth mask

A cloth mask should fit securely around the face, specifically covering the nose and the mouth areas. The mask should fit snugly on your face and be secured by ties at the back of your head or ear loops. If you are using a mask with ear loops, you can use a plastic clip or tie to join the ends together at the back of your head to make sure it fits snugly on your face.

Make sure that your mask does not have holes or any unfiltered one-way valves. This can result in breathing out the virus if you have coronavirus (COVID-19).

Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, or use hand sanitiser that is made up of over 60% alcohol, before putting on your mask and after taking it off. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth at all times and store used cloth face masks in a plastic bag until you have an opportunity to wash them.

Surgical mask (single use)

- A surgical mask should fit securely around the face, specifically covering the nose and the mouth areas.
- Before putting on the mask, wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, or use a hand sanitiser that is made up of over 60% alcohol.
- Check for defects in the mask, such as tears or broken loops.
- Position the outer side of the mask outward according to the instructions of the manufacturer.
- If present, make sure the metallic strip is at the top of the mask and positioned against the bridge of your nose.
- If the mask has:
 - ear loops: hold the mask by both ear loops and place one loop over each ear
 - ties: hold the mask by the upper strings. Tie the upper strings in a secure bow near the crown of your head. Tie the bottom strings securely in a bow near the nape of your neck
 - dual elastic bands: pull the bottom band over your head and position it against the nape of your neck. Pull the top band over your head and position it against the crown of your head.
- Mould the bendable metallic upper strip to the shape of your nose by pinching and pressing down on it with your fingers.
- Pull the bottom of the mask over your mouth and chin.
- Be sure the mask fits snugly.
- Don't touch the mask once in position.

If the mask gets soiled or damp, replace it with a new one.

Face shields

From 11:59pm 11 October you cannot wear a face shield on its own. You also cannot wear a bandana or scarf on its own.

You can wear a face shield with a face mask that covers the nose and mouth. If you have a lawful reason for not wearing a face mask, you can choose to wear a face shield on its own.

Ensure they are properly designed to cover the sides of the face and below the chin. Reusable face shields should be cleaned and disinfected after each use. Disposable face shields should only be worn for single use. Ensure you follow the instructions as per manufacturers guidelines.

How do I know my cloth face mask is working?

You know your mask is working to protect you if it is well fitted. If the ties are loose, tighten them to ensure a snug fit. The mask should fit snugly and cover your nose and mouth. Keep an eye on the integrity of the fabric as it may thin over time with repeated washing. If this happens, replace the mask.

When should I wash my cloth mask?

A cloth mask should be washed each day after use. However, if during the day your mask is visibly dirty or wet, do not continue wearing your mask; the mask needs to be washed.

Re-using a cloth mask without washing is risky because it can become contaminated or may not be as effective in protecting you.

How do I wash my cloth mask?

Cloth masks can be washed in the washing machine with other clothes, or hand-washed using soap and the warmest appropriate water setting for the cloth.

Your cloth mask should be dry before re-using it. You can use the heat setting on your dryer or lay out flat to air dry. If possible, place the cloth mask in direct sunlight. Wash your hands after handling used face masks.

How do I know when it is time to get a new cloth mask?

Each cloth mask will be constructed differently, therefore there is no specific ‘shelf life’ of a cloth mask. However, the following are signs that your cloth mask may no longer be offering you the same level of protection it once was:

- your cloth mask does not fit snugly on your face (e.g. you can feel your breath coming out of the sides of the mask)
- your cloth mask keeps falling off or sliding down
- there are holes in your cloth mask
- you need to keep adjusting your cloth mask
- the material has started to wear thin or fray.

Wearing a face mask

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

The most common types of face coverings are face masks.

The term ‘face mask’ includes cloth masks, and single-use face masks (commonly called surgical masks). A face mask is now required instead of other types of face coverings. Face masks that have unfiltered one-way valves should not be used.

Cloth masks cover the nose and mouth and are made of washable fabric. We recommend a [cloth mask 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.

Surgical masks are made with a non-woven meltblown polypropylene layer and available in various levels of protection. These are single use masks only so can't be washed and used again.

The term ‘face shields’ refer to coverings that are made from plastic or other transparent material designed or made to be worn like a visor, covering from the forehead to below the chin area and wrapping around the sides of the face. From 11:59pm 11 October you cannot wear a face shield, bandana, or scarf on its own. You can wear a face shield with a fitted face mask.

There are other types of face masks and respirators (such as P2 or N95). These are not recommended for use in the community and not advised to be used outside of healthcare or specific industries under health advice.

Are face masks effective for protecting against coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission?

Face masks have been recommended around the world for use by the community to reduce transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Your best protection is still to keep 1.5 metres apart from other people, to wash your hands thoroughly and regularly, and cough and sneeze into a tissue or your elbow.

Face masks are helpful in containing droplets when people cough, reducing the likelihood of spreading the virus. For the community, both cloth masks and surgical masks are effective in reducing the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Where can I get a face mask?

You can purchase cloth masks or surgical masks from retail outlets including chemists, hardware stores and other shops, or you can follow our directions to [make your own cloth mask](#).

The Victorian Government has placed orders for reusable fabric masks for Victorian students and teachers.

23 million single-use masks have also been ordered by the Victorian Government. Single-use masks will also be distributed to schools for immediate use while the reusable masks are manufactured.

Around 500,000 single-use masks have already been provided to DHHS for public housing tower tenants and 1.2 million single-use masks have been provided to the Department of Education and Training (DET) for use in schools.

Can I wear my mask under my chin?

No, wearing a mask under your chin does not provide protection to you or others. You need to wear your mask securely around the face, specifically covering the nose and the mouth areas.

Can I remove my face mask to smoke or use an e-cigarette?

Yes, subject to existing restrictions on smoking in public places in Victoria. A person may remove their face mask to smoke or use an e-cigarette but must put a face mask back on as soon as they finish.

The hand-to-mouth action of smoking and e-cigarette use means that people who smoke may be more vulnerable to coronavirus (COVID-19), as they are touching their face and mouth more often. You should wash your hands as soon as you finish and not share an individual cigarette or vaping device.

Can I take my face mask off when eating or drinking?

Yes. You can take your face mask off when eating or drinking. You should maintain physical distancing of 1.5 metres and practise good hygiene.

Eating and drinking should not be used as an excuse not to wear a face mask. You must use common sense and wear a face mask, where possible.

Do I need to put on a new face mask if I take it off to eat or drink?

If you need to take a mask off for eating or drinking, it is best if you put on a new face mask to avoid the risk of contamination from touching the front of the face mask. If it is not possible, make sure to wash your hands with soap and water before you put on your face mask.

If you are using a reusable mask you should carry a paper bag or zip lock bag with you to carry clean masks and keep them clean. If it is not possible, make sure to wash your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand gel before you put on your face mask.

You should always use hand sanitizer or wash your hands before and after changing your face mask.

Do I need to wear a face mask when I am driving?

If you are driving alone or only travelling with people from your household, you do not need to wear a face mask. You must put your face mask on before you leave your vehicle or if you wind down the window to talk to someone, including at a drive through to collect food or goods where being served by another person.

If you are driving with people for work or people you don't live with then you must wear a face mask unless you have a lawful excuse.

You must wear a face mask if you are a passenger or driver in a commercial vehicle such as a taxi or Uber, unless you have a lawful excuse.

Do I need to wear a face mask when I visit my partner?

Partners living separately can visit each other at home. You do not need to wear a face mask while at home together.

How do I stop face mask fogging up my glasses?

Make sure the face mask is fitted and pinched on your nose if possible. Put your glasses on after the mask. Wash your glasses with detergent and water to create a film to prevent fogging. You can also use micropore tape (available at all pharmacies) to tape the mask along the bridge of your nose and cheeks, then put your glasses on top. Or put a folded tissue across the bridge of your nose, then put your mask on and your glasses on top.

I wear a hearing aid, what tips do you have for me about wearing a face mask?

If you wear a hearing aid you need to be careful when putting on or taking off your face mask to ensure you don't lose your hearing aid or get your face mask tangled in it. Consider using a face mask that ties around the head, rather than over the ears as this will keep the ties free from your hearing aid.

If you are having trouble communicating with someone who is wearing a face mask you can ask them to speak louder or to remove their mask during your conversation. You should maintain physical distancing of at least 1.5 metres from others.

I wear traditional or religious garments that cover my head or face – what guidance can you provide for wearing a mask?

You still need to wear a fitted face mask in line with the existing requirements. There are a range of face masks available that can be worn with traditional and religious garments. These include face masks that are tied around the head, rather than looped over the ears.

A [face mask that is three layers](#) and fits securely around the face, specifically covering the nose and the mouth offers the best protection. If you are wearing a face covering, like a veil or scarf, you should wear your face mask underneath.

What's the best way to take off a face mask?

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitiser containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Don't touch the front of the face mask or your face.
- Carefully remove your face mask by grasping the ear loops or untying the ties. For face masks with a pair of ties, unfasten the bottom one first, then the top one.
- Fold the mask and put it directly into the laundry or into a disposable or washable bag for laundering. Single use surgical masks should be disposed of responsibly in the rubbish bin.
- Clean your hands again by washing them or using alcohol-based hand sanitiser.

I'm using a reusable cloth mask; how often do I have to wash it?

A cloth mask can be washed and re-used. It should be washed after each time you use it and before you put it back on. It is a good idea to have at least two, so you always have a clean one available.

Carry a paper bag or zip lock bag with you to carry clean masks and keep them clean.

Single use masks are for single-use only and should be disposed of responsibly in the rubbish bin.

Can I remove my face mask to talk with other people?

You should keep your face mask on while speaking with other people and maintain a physical distance of 1.5 metres.

You can remove your face mask if you are communicating with a person who is deaf or hard of hearing, where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication.

Exercise

Do I have to wear a face mask while exercising?

If you are doing exercise or physical activity where you are out of breath or puffing, such as jogging or running, you do not need to wear a face mask. You do have to carry a face mask with you so you can wear it before or after exercising, unless you have a lawful exception.

You must wear a face mask when walking for exercise even if the 1.5 metre physical distancing is maintained unless you have a lawful excuse such as a medical condition, where it would be dangerous to have obstructed breathing while walking around.

You can choose to wear a face shield on its own while undertaking strenuous exercise.

Will I be fined for not carrying a face mask with me when I exercise?

You must carry a face mask with you when you exercise, unless you have a lawful excuse for not wearing a face mask such as a medical condition or are under the age of 12. You can be fined if you don't wear or carry a face mask.

[You can also make your own face mask.](#)

Study and school

Do children need to wear a face mask?

Children and people aged 12 years and older should wear a face mask. Children under the age of 12 years do not have to wear a face mask but individual families can make their own decisions regarding their children.

Children who are two years old and under should never wear a face mask or covering due to choking and strangulation risks.

Will face masks be mandatory for teachers/ early learning/ day care/ kinder?

It is not compulsory for teachers, educators and carers to wear face masks while teaching or caring for children as they can interfere with their ability to clearly communicate with students. Teachers, educators and carers can choose to wear face masks if they wish when in the classroom/ facility or when teaching or providing care for children.

Teachers, educators and carers should wear face masks in other areas of the school/ facility when not teaching.

Do students at schools need to wear a face mask?

Students under the age of 12 do not have to wear face masks. Students aged 12 and over will need to wear face masks when they are attending school.

However, children who are aged 12 and over who are attending primary school do not need to wear a face mask at school. The Victorian Chief Health Officer has advised that it is not practical to require some primary school students to wear face masks while others are not required to.

Students over 12 years old who attend a specialist school are not required to wear a face mask where their disability means it would not be suitable but may do so if they or their family choose to.

Do specialist school students need to wear a face mask?

Students over the age of 12 who attend a specialist school are not required to wear a face mask where their disability means it would not be suitable. However, if wearing a face mask is suitable for that student, they must wear one.

Work and volunteering

Do I have to wear a face mask while working?

Yes, you must wear a face mask unless you meet one of the reasons for exemptions such as a medical condition.

Can I take off my face mask if I find it uncomfortable while working?

It is important you wear your face mask when at work, but some people may require short breaks from wearing their face mask. If doing so, ensure you are not near other people, and follow [this advice when removing your mask](#). Only a short break should be required.

Do I need to wear a face mask at my place of work or my desk, even if I am 1.5 metres away from others?

Yes. You must wear a face mask when you leave your home, which includes working, unless an exception applies.

I work from home – does this mean it is my workplace and I have to wear a face mask?

If you are working from home, you do not need to wear a face mask at home, unless you are [caring for someone](#) at home who has coronavirus (COVID-19).

As an employer, do I need to require my staff to wear face masks?

Yes, you are required to ensure your employees wear face masks if they are working, unless an exception applies.

I work in a call centre, do I need to wear a face mask when I am speaking with people on the telephone?

Yes, unless an exception applies. Due to the number of people who work closely together in call centres, these workplaces represent a risk for transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Do construction workers have to wear a face mask?

Yes, unless an exception applies. Construction workers will have to wear a face mask unless they meet any of the criteria for exception such as a medical condition or if wearing a face mask creates a risk to the person related to their work, as determined through OH&S guidelines.

Do I have to wear a mask while minding a child at home?

Baby-sitters and people providing at home childcare must wear a fitted face mask, unless an exception applies. These arrangements can be paid or unpaid. If you are minding a child who is over 12 years old they must wear a face mask while you are minding them, unless an exception applies.

Shopping and retail

Can I refuse someone access to my premises if they are not wearing a face mask?

Yes. You can ask someone not to enter your premises if they are not wearing a face mask unless they have a lawful exception.

Can I be refused entry or service if I am not wearing a face mask?

Yes, unless you have a lawful exception for not wearing a face mask. For their own and other customers' safety, a business owner or worker can ask you not to enter until you wear a face mask.

Can someone ask me to remove my face mask to check my ID?

Banks, police, post offices and other services can ask that you remove your face mask to check your identity.

When purchasing alcohol or tobacco you may be asked by staff to remove your face mask as part of checking your ID.

Victoria Police can also ask you to remove your face covering to confirm your identity.

Will business owners be fined if customers refuse to wear face masks?

A business owner will not be fined if a customer refuses to wear a face mask without a lawful excuse. The penalty would be applied to the customer.

As a business owner, if a staff member or customer refuses to wear a face mask will I be fined?

Responsibility for wearing a face mask rests with the individual. Individuals who do not wear a face mask and do not have a lawful reason can be fined \$200. A business owner will not be fined if a customer refuses to wear a face mask.

An employer must take reasonable steps to ensure an employee working at their premises wears a face mask at all times, unless a lawful exception applies.

Enforcement

What happens if I don't wear a face mask?

We are asking everyone to wear face masks when they leave home to help slow the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19), unless a lawful exception applies. Fines will be given to people who do not wear a face mask unless they have a valid reason for an exemption.

Will I be fined for not carrying a face mask with me?

You can be fined if you don't wear or carry a face mask with you, unless you have a lawful excuse such as a medical condition, you're under the age of 12, or when you're eating drinking or smoking.

You can also [make your own face covering \(Word\)](#).

CORONAVIRUS

- **Victoria's restriction levels**
- **How to stay safe and well**
 - [Test Isolation and worker support payments](#)
 - [Getting tested for coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
 - **Face masks**
 - [Hygiene and physical distancing](#)
 - [Information for older people and seniors](#)
 - [Quarantine and isolation](#)
 - [Symptoms and risks](#)
 - [Mental health resources](#)
 - [Financial support for coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
 - [Family violence support](#)
 - [Information for people with disability](#)
 - [Translated resources](#)
 - [COVIDSafe app](#)
 - [Infection prevention control resources](#)
 - [Information for LGBTIQ+ communities](#)
 - [Seasonal hay fever and asthma](#)
 - [What we know about coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- **Getting tested**
- **For health services and professionals**
- **Latest news and data**
- **For service providers**
- **Business and industry**
- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities**